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THE

WEST POINT CADET;

OR, THE

YOUNG OFFICER'S BRIDE.

A Romance in Real Life.

BY HARRY HAZEL,

Author of the 'Burglars,' 'Belle of Boston,' 'Nun of St. Ursula,' 'Rival Chieftains,' &c

BOSTON:
PUBLISHED BY F. GLEASON, 1 1-2 TREMONT ROW.
1845.

Entered according to Act of Congress, by F. Gleason, in the year 1845, in the Clerk's Office, of the District Court of Massachusetts.

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THE WEST-POINT CADET.

NOTE TO THE READER.

We are again pleased to see our humble efforts in print, and we are encouraged to perceive that our enterprising publisher deems the present production worthy of a more beautiful dress than any in which we have yet had the honor of appearing.

The novel, as our title indicates, is a 'Romance in Real Life,' and most of our readers, that are acquainted with the *locale* of its principal scenes, will accord to us the rare merit of writing a novel not wholly imaginative. Facts, startling facts, abound in every chapter, and to corroborate which we can produce abundant testimony.

To the great mass of the reading community, who have rendered our previous productions far more successful than we ever dared anticipate, we submit the 'West Point Cadet,' honestly believing that it will be perused with an interest paramount to that excited by any of the author's former works.

HARRY HAZEL.

Cambridge, August, 1845.

1-10-43

THE WEST-POINT CADET.

CHAPTER I.

A Magnificent Ball at P——'s. The Belles of the Metropolis. Effie Stanwood. The Gay Southerner. The West-Point Cadet. Rivalry. Singular conduct of the Southerner.

'She was the very prettiest of girls,
Of a bright cheek and a voluptuous eye;
Of ivory forehead shaded by dark curls,
And pouting lip of a most delicate die;
Mild, lovely, sentimental and romancing
Partial withal, especially to dancing.'

J. O. Sargent.

BRILLIANT indeed was the assemblage of city beaux and belles that graced the fashionable Saloon of that Prince of Dancing Masters, Signor P———, on a bright starlight evening in the month of December 183–. It was by far the most magnificent *fete* of the season; and an unusual number of invitations having been distributed among that class who claim to be the aristocratic division of our population, a large concourse honored the occasion with their presence. The ball had been a most prominent topic for conversation for many weeks previously. Extensive preparations were made by those who had the management of the affair, aided by the co-operation of those who intended to be present, in rendering it by far the most splendid dancing assembly that was ever got up in the tri-mountain city. Consequently, when evening came, and the hall was illuminated, and the glittering throng assembled, a scene presented itself, altogether too gorgeous to comport with the plain notions of the multitude composing what has often been termed the City of the Pilgrims, and better comporting with the entertainments of an Eastern Prince, or those of the nobility of our transatlantic brethren. There was a display of costly laces, silks and satins, embroidered, flounced and spangled to an extravagant degree; diamonds, emeralds, topazes, amethysts, and other precious stones, sparkled in the form of bracelets, tiaras, necklaces, etc. It seemed that on this occasion each lady had determined to outvie all others in the elegance and richness of attire and ornament. To some this splendid profusion lent an additional charm to their persons; but from others, whose

'Beauty unadorned is most adorned,'

it detracted materially.

We have spoken only of the gorgeousness and richness of display made on the

occasion. It was also a scene of unsurpassing beauty and loveliness. There were sparkling black eyes, and mild blue eyes, and eyes like the gazelle—there were rosy-red cheeks, and snow-white cheeks, and cheeks of the fair brunette. The natural crowning ornament of woman, hung in raven and golden tresses upon snowy bosoms, or braided upon the head and decorated with flowers and jewels. There were sylph-like figures flitting about with graceful and elastic steps; figures dignified and commanding; and figures voluptuously beautiful. Then, what a variety of expressions were to be seen in the faces of the feminine portion of the assemblage. Here stood one with a countenance radiant with admiration and love, whose every word sent a pleasing thrill through the heart of him on whose arm she was gracefully leaning. There sat one with a modest, placid expression, sweetly beautiful, and whose mild blue eyes, partially concealed beneath long lashes, were bent upon the floor, and whenever they dared to look upward and chanced to encounter the look of one of the other sex, they would quickly fall and crimson shadows would instantaneously suffuse her lovely cheeks. Another, near by, with a dignified and haughty look, who smiled and frowned alternately; whose every remark was spiced with a sprinkling of irony or satire, and who looked upon all modest or simple beauties with contempt. Still another, but how different from the last—how beautiful, how seraphic was the expression of her pearly white face—possessing charms too pure for earth, and which even angels might have gazed upon with delight. And yet another, brilliant, elegant, and gay, but wild as the untamed antelope—her large hazel eyes as bright and fiery as the eagle's, piercing and flashing as sparkling gems—her mouth displaying two rows of white polished teeth of nature's own handiwork, far more perfect and reglar than was ever attained by the most skillful of the dental art. In the language of the Scottish bard—

> 'A hair-brain'd, sentimental trace
> Was strongly marked in her face;
> A wildly, witty, dazzling grace
> Shone full upon her.'

There were others whose features denoted every passion—every feeling—every sentiment; and from among these last we have taken one who is to figure as the heroine of these pages.

Effie Stanwood was her name—a bright and beautiful being of 'sweet sixteen,' with golden hair, and laughing blue eyes; a lily-white complexion; rose-red cheeks, and carmine-tinged lips. Her figure was symmetrically beautiful, and full of grace, and sported little hands and little feet—the latter not so small as a Chinese lady's, nor so large as a Mantaree squaw's—but just large enough to be pretty and useful—and every body knows the true standard of measurement for a lady's foot.

But her lovely features, her golden hair, or the grace and perfection of her limbs, weigh but little in our estimation when contrasted with the sweetness of her disposition—the richness of intellect which she possessed—and the lady-like accomplishments which she had acquired in an eminent degree.

Effie was the pride and ornament of the reputed wealthy and aristocratic family of Stanwoods; and her beauty and attainments were the wonder and envy of all who com posed her circle of acquaintance; and, in deed, among those who had caught but the casual glance of her love-beaming eye she was an object of peculiar interest.

This evening was the first of Effie's appearance at a public assembly, and the great numbers in attendance, together with the unrivalled splendor of the scene, caused at first in her a slight embarrassment, and heightened the rosy hue of her cheeks, but she eventually recovered her wonted ease, and joined in the festivities with all the interest, pleasure and confidence of her more experienced companions.

I have as yet said nothing of the various groups of gay and fashionable young gentlemen, who stood around the hall in the early part of the evening, engaged in arranging their matters of etiquette for the evening, and occasionally glancing with admiring eyes upon the blaze of feminine beauty arrayed before them. The gentlemen, it must be confessed, were far behind

the ladies in the costliness of their apparel, but they were as richly and as showily dressed, as the extremity of the Parisian modes would allow.

On this particular occasion the spacious Saloon was fitted up in a style of dazzling splendor; and from the gorgeous chandeliers a brilliant light was suffused, rivalled only by the brightness of the noon-day sun. The large and costly mirrors, reaching to the floor, reflected a thousand times the animated throng, together with the superb and magnificent drapery and other decorations of the saloon. A full orchestra of musicians enlivened the scene with the sublime and spirit-moving strains of Rossini, Auber, Strauss, and other gifted composers. The banquet, too, which was served up in an adjoining apartment, was expensively luxurious, and it added much to the spirit and zest of the occasion. Altogether it was the most brilliant ball that had ever been got up in our New-England metropolis, and it created quite a sensation among the beaux and belles of the aristocracy.

Effie Stanwood was accompanied to this gay scene of pleasure by her father, who, placing her for the evening under the protection of a gallant young Southron, an acquaintance of the family, retired to his home, seemingly feeling perfectly satisfied with his substitute, of whom he had a high opinion on account of his rich connexions in the sunny South; and, although Mr. Stanwood had never even hinted or insinuated such a thing, yet it was a thought almost uppermost in his mind, that George Sumpter was precisely such an individual on whom he would gladly bestow his amiable and beautiful daughter; yet this was strange, for there were some doubtful points in his character, that Mr. Stanwood could not have been unapprized of; nevertheless he frequently invited Sumpter to his house, and even endeavored to make his visits agreeable by tasking the polite accomplishments of Miss Effie.

It is true that the young Southron was a handsome, gentlemanly appearing man; generous and even lavish of his money; possessing a collegiate education, and talents of a respectable order. But he was a person whose character was fully imbued with those false notions of honor peculiar to southern bloods; he could not brook an insult without seeking immediate revenge, nor even forgive those who departed one iota from the established conventionalisms of the polished circle where he associated. And from this feeling he was frequently subjected to humiliating annoyances and petty grievances which he could not avert, and for which he could not with impunity, in this peace-loving community, seek redress; consequently among the many who first courted his society, there were eventually several who became of necessity his enemies.

To such a personage was Effie Stanwood, for this occasion, consigned by her father, although there were others present, in her opinion, who would have been quite as agreeable. Sumpter was excessively pleased at what he termed the old gentleman's courtesy, and with an air of triumph he boasted among his companions of his good fortune, and with exultation and ineffable delight he pointed out to them his beautiful charge. He determined that his undivided efforts throughout the evening should tend towards rendering her enjoyment, and now that an interrupted opportunity occurred, he would strive to ingratiate himself into her favor, and if possible win a smile of love from her sweet lips.

But his joyful anticipations were not destined to be realized, for it so happened that this resolution if pursued, would be the precise mode to mar the pleasure which she also had fondly anticipated; but how to avoid his importunities was a matter predominant in her mind.

When the opening quadrille was called, Sumpter, with a satisfied air, led Effie to the floor, and at the conclusion of the dance and after excusing himself to Effie, retired for a short time to the drawing-room.

Meanwhile, a young and exceedingly handsome fellow, in the neat uniform of a West-Point Cadet, made his appearance in the saloon. He had a noble and commanding look, yet his countenance bore strong indications of amiability of temper, and a heart of magnanimity and generosity, and

from his full dark eye beamed an intelligence that could not be mistaken. For a few moments he directed his gaze whereever the attraction seemed most dazzling, and at length his eyes became fixed upon a less dazzling object, but infinitely more beautiful, and none other than Effie, our heroine. A gleam of wonder and delight excited his noble features, and after feasting his eyes for a few moments upon the attractive object, her gaze met his, and a mutual recognition took place. He approached the blushing girl, and after the usual civilities he took a seat beside her.

'It gives me joy to meet you!' said the young Cadet, who was none other than Eugene Merrill, one of Effie's early companions and playmates, who had on that day arrived in his native town.

'Why, Eugene, it is indeed you!' said she, with her face illumined with delight, and a deeper shade of crimson suffusing her lovely cheeks. 'When did you arrive in town?'

'This morning! I called at your house but an hour since and there learned that you were here.'

'I regret exceedingly that I was not at home to greet you.'

'Nay, nay, Effie, you would not be absent from this gay scene of pleasure?'

'Indeed, I would; I do not find that enjoyment here, that I had been led to anticipate. But Eugene,' continued she, playfully changing the subject; 'how queerly you look. You have grown so tall and have on such a peculiar dress that you scarcely appear like yourself. It was some time after you came into the hall that I recognised you.'

'Every one that formerly knew me expresses surprise that I have attained to man's stature; and as for my dress I am compelled to wear it, whether it is fitting the occasion or not. It is an imperative regulation that every Cadet shall wear the uniform of the Academy whether he be on duty or on furlough.'

'I am sure it is very becoming to you,' she replied.

'Now, Effie, you have criticised me so closely, allow me to express my surprise at the change I observe in you. When I last visited your house I saw a merry, sprightly, pretty little girl, skipping about in great glee, and now I behold———'

'An ugly old maid, I suppose you intend to say,' interrupted Effie, with an assumed haughtiness.

'Nay, nay, Miss Effie—a charming young lady!'

'Oh, fie! Mister Eugene,' said she, with a slight stress on the 'Mister;' you shall not make fun of me within my hearing.'

'But I speak earnestly and truly!'

'I protest, Eugene, against your flattery. Why do you not go and bestow your idle compliments on some one of those richly dressed ladies grouped before that large mirror?'

'My judgment and taste would pass me by this whole congregation of dazzling beauty to bestow even one glance upon thee.'

'Why what an inveterate flatterer you have become! I trust that your West Point professors have taught you something besides flattery.'

'Believe me, I have learned little else besides solving Mathematical problems, aim a cannon, shoulder a musket, drill a company of raw recruits,' and——'

'Compliment the ladies!' added Effie, laughingly.

'Well, well, if you persist in having it so; but bear in mind that I never bestow praise where I do not think it is richly merited. Who is that dashing, impertinent looking fellow,' continued Merrill, 'staring so frowningly upon me?'

It was Sumpter, who had for some time stood on the opposite side of the hall, viewing with disdainful looks the happy interview of Eugene and Effie.

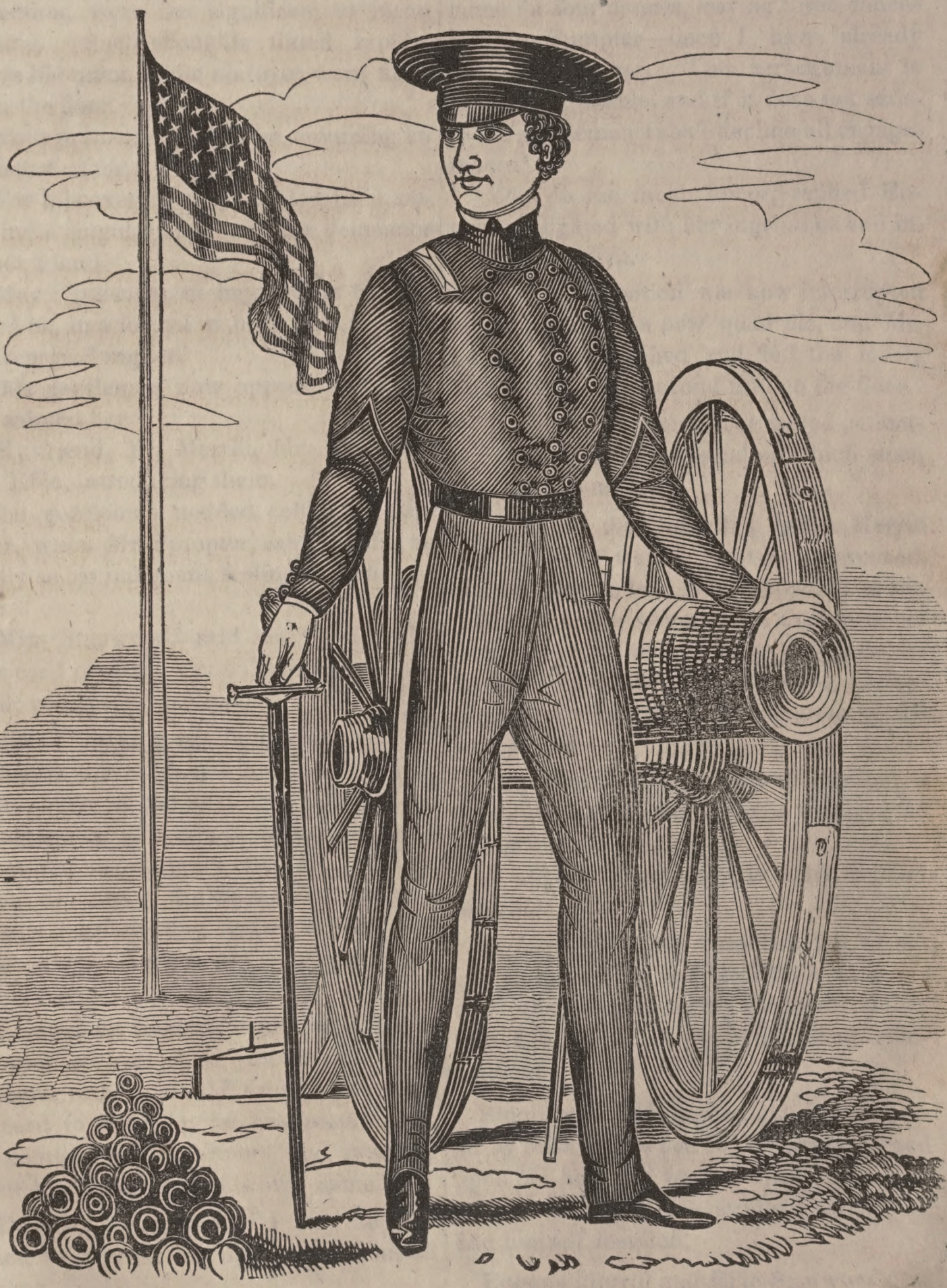
She turned her eyes and met the angry gaze of the young Southron.

'Do you allude to the man with the mustache?' asked Effie.

'The same. Who is he?'

'He is—that is—,' stammered she, 'he is a southern gentleman—an acquaintance of our family, under whose protection my father placed me for this evening.'

The expression of Eugene's countenance



PORTRAIT OF THE WEST-POINT CADET.

changed from complacency to doubt and apprehension. That this man was a rival seemed probable—the words of Miss Stanwood that he was a friend of the family—that her father had placed her under his protection, were too significant to mean nothing. Such thoughts flitted rapidly across his mind, while his eyes were fixed upon the floor.

'Your protector?' asked he, assuming an undisturbed air.

'For this evening only,' added Effie, observing a singular change in the demeanor of her friend.

'May I presume to inquire his name?' asked he, in a formal manner.

'George Sumpter.'

This gentleman now approached Effie, and saluted her.

'My friend, Mr. Merrill, Mr. Sumpter,' said Effie, introducing them.

The gentlemen nodded coldly to each other, when Mr. Sumpter, said to Effie, as mildly as his indignant feelings would admit:

'Miss Stanwood,' said he, 'I will take your card of dances and have the blanks filled, with your permission.'

Without making any reply she placed in his hands the card, and one after another, in the course of the next five minutes, he led up several of his most intimate acquaintances and introduced them. He then returned the card, at the same time informing her that the remaining blank places, if perfectly agreeable, she might consider as himself.

'Excessively modest,' remarked Effie, as Sumpter left her. 'Do you not think my rotector rather partial?' said she, handing the card to Merrill; 'he has secured me five gentlemen for partners, and reserved seven blank places for his own name.'

'Exceedingly selfish, if I may be permitted to express my opinion,' remarked Eugene.

'It is shameful,' said she with emphasis; I am determined to dance with no gentleman seven times. It seems to me highly improper.'

These remarks caused Merrill's face again to brighten.

'Then,' said he, 'you will allow your old friend the pleasure of your hand for one or two dances at least.'

'Yes, Eugene,' replied Effie, writing with her pencil; 'there—I have written your name for four dances, leaving three dances for Mr. Sumpter—once I have already been his partner. This arrangement is certainly equitable, and if it does not satisfy the gentleman I shall decline all engagements.'

'You do me much honor,' replied Eugene, delighted with her ingenuous and independent spirit.

Their conversation was now interrupted by the calling of a new quadrille, and Mr. Sumpter approached and led the lovely Miss Stanwood a second time to the floor.

Merrill did not dance, but waited patiently until the number was called which stood opposite his name.

At length the quadrille, which Merrill had patiently waited for, was announced, and he arose to lead Miss Stanwood to the floor, but at the moment he extended his hand, he was rudely crowded aside by Sumpter who had suddenly made his approach on witnessing the intentions of the young Cadet.

'Sir, I have a prior claim to this lady's hand,' said Sumpter; 'she is engaged to me for the next dance.'

'I appeal to the lady herself!' replied Merrill.'

'I have taken the responsibility of engaging myself to Mr. Merrill for this and two other dances as my card will show,' said Effie, with an air of dignified independence.

Sumpter looked abashed at being thwarted by Miss Stanwood so decisively, turned upon his heel and walked away, muttering silent curses upon the stranger whom he had himself insulted.

Eugene Merrill and Effie Stanwood now walked across the saloon hand in hand.—By the politeness of the Master of Ceremonies, the courteous and affable P——, the head of the first sett, as a mark of distinction, was assigned to them. All eyes were concentrated upon the graceful couple as

they moved through the figures of the dance, and there were not among that assemblage of beauty and fashion, a gentleman and lady who attracted such marked attention as did Eugene and Effie. She seemed the personification of modesty, grace and loveliness—while his well proportioned and manly figure, his handsome features, intelligent expression, and unassuming manners, denoted him truly as one of 'Nature's noblemen.' If the old saying be a true one, that 'matches are sometimes made in Heaven,' none would have doubted for a moment that their names were recorded together. The kind glance of Effie's large blue eye, occasionally caught the tender radiance beaming from Merrill's, and mutually spoke volumes to the hearts of each other. Every one is aware that the sense of sight is of a more spiritual and elvated character than any of the other senses, and that thoughts are transferred to one another with the rapidity of lightning—the organ of vision then may be not inappropriately termed the 'magnetic telegraph' of the heart; and we are firmly convinced that [illegible] more meaning conveyed from hea[illegible]to heart in the occasional glances of Eugene and Miss Effie than could have been expressed in half a score of closely printed pages.

It is unnecessary for us to detail the many trifling incidents which followed throughout the evening after Merrill's first appearance on the floor. Suffice it here to remark that she performed her engagements strictly, however disagreeable several of them seemed to her; and while the partner of Sumpter, she seemed abstracted from the enlivening music and exciting movements of the dance; an expression of coldness rested upon her countenance, to dispel which, and gain from her one complacent look, all his loquacious efforts were ineffectual.

During Effie's last dance with Eugene, he offered to escort her home.

'I willingly and gladly accept your company,' said she, 'provided my father does not come for me. But I fear my protector, as he calls himself, will think that I slight him.'

'Let me not interfere, Effie, with any engagement that you have made with Mr. Sumpter, or any one else. I would not be thought intrusive.'

'Oh no, Eugene, I have made none except to you.'

'I perceive that Mr. Sumpter eyes me suspiciously. I doubt not that he will feel very indignant at my conduct.'

'He has no reason for such feelings. He has not expressed even a wish to see me home. You have kindly invited me to go with you, and I gladly accept the invitation.'

This arrangement, as the young Cadet had anticipated, was not consonant with the intentions of Sumpter, who, having so much authority from her father, supposed that she would not presume to listen to such a proposal from another.

The hours of the gay assembly flitted speedily by, and three o'clock had arrived before any indication was made by the concourse to separate.

Effie now expressed her desire to Merrill to leave the hall, and leaning upon his arm he escorted her to the drawing-room, where he left her to prepare for going home, while he stepped out for a moment to engage a carriage.

When he returned he found Sumpter standing beside the door of the ladies' room, evidently awaiting the reappearance of Miss Stanwood. Merrill, not wishing to appear rude, retired to the opposite door, where he could observe any one that might appear. After a lapse of five minutes, Effie made her appearance, when Sumpter placed himself beside her and offered his arm, while Merrill appeared on the other side. In the confusion of the moment, Effie had nearly placed her arm within Sumpter's, ere she discovered that it was his. She immediately withdrew from his side and said:

'Mr. Sumpter, I am engaged to go home with Mr. Merrill.'

'I claim precedence by virtue of the express wish of your father,' said Sumpter, again offering his arm.

'My father gave me no instructions to that effect.'

'It matters not; he placed you under my protection, and I shall be considered responsible for your safety,' remarked Sumpter, angrily.

'Oh, never fear for her safety,' rejoined Merrill.'

'By whose authority do *you* interfere?' asked Sumpter.

'By the lady's herself, and I presume she is perfectly competent to judge of matters so nearly concerning her,' answered Merrill, calmly.

Effie now took the arm of Eugene, by whom she was escorted to the carriage, followed closely by Sumpter. Merrill had assisted Effie into the vehicle, and was in the act of getting in himself, when Sumpter leaped forward, pushed Merrill aside with the intention of usurping his place, and as he placed one foot upon the step, he was seized by the strong arm of the young Cadet, who, without a scarcely perceptible effort hurled the impertinent and intrusive southerner to the sidewalk.

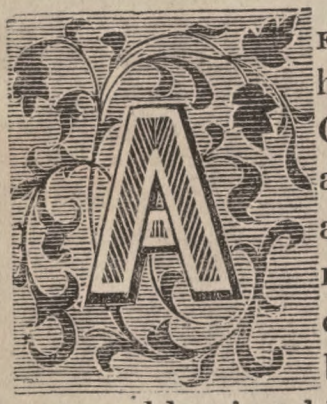
Merrill leaped into the vehicle and drove on. Sumpter regained his feet, overtook the carriage, and, with a malignant emphasis, exclaimed to his antagonist: 'We shall meet again!'

CHAPTER II.

The Young Southerner. Resolves to Fight a Duel. Difficulty in penning a Challenge. The Slave. An Original Character. Scenes partaking both of the Serious and Ludicrous.

'Tremble, ye base! affect to scorn
The man with noble passions born,
Who drinks not of your bigot draught.
But know, that while with justice fraught
He dares excite the black-wing'd storm,
Know, that the manifold injuries
He dares with rigor to chastise,
He never dares perform.'

ANON.



FEW short hours only had passed away, when George Sumpter, still agitated by the unpleasant events of the last night, arose from his couch, where he had been unable to obtain rest, and leaving his room repaired to the office of a noted Counsellor, with whom he was at that time studying the profession of law. It was at an earlier hour than legal gentlemen are accustomed to commence their daily avocations, consequently he found himself with no other company than his negro servant, who was employed in sweeping out the office. Entering the anti-room, he threw himself into a chair, which he drew towards a table, and commenced writing. Around him were shelves of antiquated musty tomes, covered with dust and cobwebs, clearly indicating that most of them had not for a long time been disturbed; while upon the table at which he was seated more modern works carelessly reclined. The student's mind seemed at this particular time impressed with something of greater import than legal lore. He had with great pains written several notes, all addressed to the same person, and all of the same import, but differently expressed, and neither one of them appeared to give him satisfaction. He threw down his pen, jumped up and began pacing the floor. His countenance wore a dark and sinister look, his lips were compressed and a fiendish smile curled his lip.

'Confound my stupidity!' muttered he to himself. 'Singular that I cannot indite so simple a matter as a challenge! But I am resolved that he shall have one! My vengeance shall follow this upstart Cadet until my purposes are fully accomplished and my wrongs redressed. I know that it is in direct violation of the statutes of this commonwealth to give or accept a challenge; but what do I care—laws are not made to reach lawyers. Yes—I am determined to call him out or cowhide him in the street at all hazards! I feel that he has insulted me—grossly insulted me—thwarted my fondest wishes even in the eyes of many of my

familiar acquaintances; and now, should I make no demonstrations towards avenging myself they will deem my conduct cowardly, knowing my views upon affairs of this nature. Let me see—I must write it in a bravado style—it will frighten him—he's nothing but a Yankee, and of course has not the courage of a ribbed nose baboon. It is true he has a military education, but pistol-shooting is not taught at West Point; here again I have the advantage, for I have the reputation, at least, of being a dead shot! and this 'reputation' will undoubtedly serve me as well as if I were a second Nimrod. He dare not meet me, and I will summon him to account boldly and fearlessly! Resuming his seat he took up a pen and wrote the following:

"2– Court Street,
Boston, Dec. —, 183–.

Sir,—

Your conduct towards me, last evening, was of a character too gross and aggravating for me to pass lightly over; therefore, if you style yourself a gentleman, which your standing in society leads me to suppose, I doubt not you will give me a meeting as early as possible, thereby saving you the mortification of being posted as a poltroon and a puppy. The bearer of this will settle all the preliminaries according to usage regulating affairs of honor.

I decline receiving any apology that can be made, either written or verbal.

(Signed) Geo. Sumpter.

To Eugene Merrill,
Cadet, West-Point
Military Acad."

'That sounds more to the purpose,' said Sumpter. 'He cannot avoid me after such a summons without irretrievably disgracing himself. And now for a proper man to be my second in this affair,' continued he thoughtfully. It is difficult to find one in this anti-duelling, puritanical city. Let me see—Ned Dawson—ah! the very man.—He's all fight—loves duelling better than anything else in the world!'

At this moment the young negro opened the door.

'Jeff!' said he, 'is that your grinning countenance?'

'Yaas, massa, dis be me.'

'Do you know, Jeff, where my friend Dawson resides?'

'Massa Dawson! I tinks I does,' replied Jeff, scratching his head. 'Ib you mean dat chap what hab de flummux here one night, I knows zacly, for I had a hard job getting him home dat time.'

'You shouldn't remember such things, Jeff.'

'I had forgot 'um Massa—neber should hab tought ob him 'gin ib you hadn't put it into dis chile's head.'

'Well, well, let that pass, do you know where he lodges?'

'Yaas, massa, jess as well as I knows where I ties up mysef. It's on toder side ob Bacon Hill, on de souf side ob Bullknap treet, tree doors from Jumbo Jum's wittlin' sullar.'

'You needn't be so explicit, Jeff. Run quickly to his house——'

'Yaas Massa!' interrupted the negro.

'—and tell him that I have an affair on my hands——'

'I doesn't see any ting on yer hands, massa!'

'Shut up, you black scoundrel!' sharply exclaimed Sumpter. 'Tell him that I require his assistance immediately.'

Jeff started.

'Come back here—you need not tell him any thing.'

'Keep mum, hey?'

'Keep still while I address him a note.'

Sumner wrote as follows:

"Thursday, A. M.

"Dear Dawson—

Congratulate me. I have the happiness of making known to you that I have at length succeeded in getting myself into a bit of a scrape. Nothing less, my dear fellow, than an 'affair of honor.' I am one of the principals and the challenger. Knowing that you, above all things else, delight in sport of this nature, you shall participate on the occasion—I appoint you my second. Come to my room, at the Albion, at eight o'clock—be punctual—where we can dis-

cuss the matter fully over a bottle or two of 'Schreider.'

Yours, faithfully,

SUMPTER.

P. S. I dreamed of 'hair-triggers' this morning."

'There, Jeff,' said Sumpter, after he had affixed the seal, take this note, addressed to Merrill, to the Post-Office, and that one to Dawson's lodgings as speedily as your long heels can carry you.'

'I'll be dar, massa, in de twinklum ob a possum's eye,' said Jeff, rolling about the white of his eyes.'

'Wait for an answer.'

'Oh yaas, massa, I'll ax him to tell me tree, four answers.'

The negro bounded suddenly into the street, and as rapidly as his nimble limbs could carry him pursued his way towards the head of Belknap street, leading from Beacon street, where we shall announce his arrival in due time.

Sumpter had brought the negro, whom we have given the cognomen of Jeff, from his father's plantation in one of the Carolinas. He was a slave, about fifteen years of age,and possessed considerable shrewdness and cunning, which qualities caused his young master to make quite a pet of him. Sumpter had no fears of Jeff's making any attempt to seek protection under the laws of Massachusetts, and thus be freed from the bonds of slavery, from the fact that his own father and mother were then slaves upon Mr. Sumpter's plantation. Yet some demonstrations were made by several abolitionists to ensure his freedom, by endeavoring to instil into his young mind the blessings of liberty, but all their philanthropic efforts failed, for Jeff either did not appreciate the idea of becoming a freeman, or prefered remaining in his present conditiou.

Jeff soon reached the house where Dawson resided, rang the bell, enquired for that gentleman, and was conducted directly to his apartment. A brief description of that worthy, which we shall strive to render intelligible to the reader, will not be deemed out of place here.

Before a comfortable grate of burning anthracite coal, and in a large armed rocking chair, sat or rather reclined a thin-visaged, slight-formed, sallow-complexioned young man, whose nether limbs occupied two common chairs, placed far enough apart to admit the bowl of a huge *hookah*, from which, through its twisted and coiled tube, he was drawing into his mouth the smoke of a mixture of opium and finely-flavored Turkish tobacco, and from thence it was leisurely emitted in wreaths, globes, and a variety of other shapes, which the aforesaid gentleman watched and contemplated with the most exquisite satisfaction as they melted into the air above him. He had black piercing eyes, and raven locks which strayed in knotted and tangled confusion over his shoulders. We have said that he was thin-visaged—he was even cadaverous-looking; and although he was not upwards of twenty-one years of age, his thin, wrinkled skin indicated that he had reached middle life. He seemed the personification of happiness, and occasionally as he smiled and drew the amber-mouthed hookah from his lips, he displayed two rows of fine pearl-white teeth, which, with his bright eyes and intellectually cast forehead, relieved the otherwise disagreeable features of his countenance. His black suit, although of fine fabric and genteelly made, looked rurty, and was indeed almost worn threadbare. His cravat comported well with the rest of his wardrobe: it looked as if the owner had put it on when new, and had not allowed himself the trouble to remove it since. He wore upon his head a slouchy smoking cap, which had once boasted of a bright scarlet hue, but had changed into a dirty crimson; and upon his elevated feet were a pair of embroidered slippers, with holes in the soles, and, altogether, appeared quite as antiquated as his person and the residue of his apparel. Upon a table near by were scattered sundry works of eminent literary geniuses, together with several sheets of manuscript, pen, ink, paper, &c., denoting that their owner frequently employed himself in other matters besides smoking his favorite hookah. Over the mantel-piece were suspended a pair of foils

MIDNIGHT SURPRISE.

Mr. Stanwood frightened at a supposed Apparition, but soon discovers that it his daughter, who makes him a visit in her night-robes.

and wire-masks to match, also a pair of boxing gloves, which clearly illustrate another prominent trait of his character.

Such was Edward Dawson—or Ned Dawson as he was familiarly called—at the period of which we are now writing. He was a southerner of respectable and even wealthy parentage, and was sent to Yale College at the age of sixteen, from whence he was expelled during his Junior term, for challenging one of the tutors of that Institution, among other flagrant misdemeanors, on account of some trivial offence which he conceived he had received from his tutor during recitation. He immediately returned home, and after the lapse of one year, he was banished from his father's house for aiding one of his wild comrades to elope with his own sister;—she having become enamored of him, and her father positively refusing to sanction the match and even denied him admission within his doors. This conduct incensed the feelings of the old gentleman so much at his son's conduct that he gave him some few hundred dollars in money and banished him from his home for ten years; with the instructions, that, after the term of banishment should expire, if he then returned absolutely reformed, he would again take him into favor; but if on the contrary he should still find him reckless and heedless, he would disinherit and banish him forever.

At this critical period, Dawson happened to fall in with his friend and classmate, George Sumpter; and as the latter was on his way to Boston, Ned resolved to accompany him, and, if possible, to obtain a livelihood by his pen, he having evinced considerable talent in poetical composition while at Yale College.

Two years of Dawson's banishment from his kindred and his home had now elapsed; and, instead of the time being devoted as he had resolved, he wasted it partly in carousing and dissipating with his friends, partly in lounging, smoking opium and tobacco, and occasionally writing a few sentimental rhymes for the 'Lady's Book,' or for some other Magazine of the 'feminine gender.' The habit of smoking he indulged in to great excess—a habit irretrievably fixed upon him—the effects of which were plainly visible in the sallowness of his complexion and in his enervated limbs. His money had long since been exhausted, and for some months he had been necessitated to enact the part of 'Jeremy Diddler,' or in more explicit terms he lived by borrowing without paying, and by other means usually practised by the 'Man about Town; and he was so admirably adapted to this sort of life, that he was always abundantly supplied with those articles which were his greatest luxuries and which constituted the chief part of his happiness.

On the morning that Sumpter had sent Jeff to his lodgings he had employed himself in smoking, as usual, and thus had soothed himself into a dreamy state of unconsciousness, from which he was aroused by a loud knocking at the door of his apartment.

'C-o-m-e!' exclaimed he in a drawling tone.

The door slowly opened and the young Ethiopian stood grinning before him.

'Ah, Jeff—it's you is it?'

'Yah! I rader tink 'tis dis chile,' answered the negro, scratching his wool.

'Well, Jeff, how's your master?'

'Oh, massa, he be bery well, ony de debil got inter him dis mornin' somehow or oder—he, he, haw, haw!'

'I should like to know what in 'de debil' you're grinning at?'

'Noffin, massa Dawson, I'se on'y 'tudyin' rifmetic leetle.'

'What do you mean, you young imp of darkness?' ejaculated Dawson.

'Why I wur jis a calkylatin' massa Dawson, ib it take tree chair for leetle man to set in, how many chair would 'em take to hole de Kentucky Giant? He, he, he, haw, haw, yah! yah! whew!!'

Dawson could not help smiling at the facetiousness and comical phiz of the negro, but assuming a stern expression, he enquired:

'What? come here to blackguard? you little satirical devil!'

'No, no, massa, keep cool, keep your temper down to de freezin' pint!'

'What do you want, you little sooty son of thunder?' demanded Dawson, fiercely.

'Dat's jis what I wur gwan to tell ye.—Now keep cool and I'll splain de hole bizness. Yah, yah, whew!'

'What's the matter now, Jeff?'

'Dis room am so foggy dat it tickles my sneezer, dat's all, ony I can't hep laffin a dat twistified lookin' ting you hab got in your mouf;—he, he, he, whew!'

'Well, Jeff, never mind what you see!—Let's know your errand at once. How's your master?'

'I jis told you how dat de debil wur in him. He's gwan to hab a fight.'

'Fight?' ejaculated Dawson, 'what do you mean?'

'Massa's gwan to fought a duel!'

'Fight a duel? come, come, Jeff, none of your tricks! Pshaw! Sumpter fight a duel? Why he hasn't the pluck of a tame goose!'

'Dat's bery true, massa Dawson; but what I tells you is de trufe, de hole trufe, and noffin' else, as de clark ob de Police Court says.'

'Who's he going to fight with?'

'Wall, I doesnt know dat. He telled me to locomotise my carcase up here a leetle swifter dan a streak ob litenin', and to tell you dat he had an affair on his hands and wants your 'sistance.'

'Is that all?'

'Oh no, dere's a billey—dat'll splain de hole bizness.'

'You little tormenting imp of Satan, why didn't you give me this in the first place?'

'Coz, my massa always tells me to 'bey orders, and he tole me to tell you what I hab jis tole you.'

Dawson read over the billet, kicked over the two chairs on which his nether limbs rested, jumped upon the floor, and seizing the hand of the wonder-struck negro, he shook it with infinite delight.

'Good! glorious!' exclaimed he. 'You think there'll be no backing out, Jeff?'

'No, massa Dawson—I guess when dey come to de scratch and dey 'gin to pace off, wid dere backs toward one anoder, dey'll boff go ahead like a couple ob slowcomotive bullgines! whew! heah! heah! What you tink, massa?'

'I'll prevent such a catastrophe as that, Jeff. I'll spur him on—I'll make him stand ground! Won't it be glorious? A Duel? why, I had well nigh forgotten that there's such a word in the English vocabulary. It'll seem quite like old times! Tell Sumpter I'll be punctual to a second! A duel in Boston? How it will make the Yankees stare! Well, Jeff, have you done your errand?'

'Yes, saah!'

'What in the devil do you wait for then?'

'For furder 'ticulars, massa Dawson.'

'I have nothing further to say! Begone! you sooty son of Ethiopia!'

'Yes, saah! I come up here like a streak ab litenin', now I'll wanish back like a Missippy mud-scow. Now, doesn't you forgit de duel, if you does I shall hab to fought mysef.'

'Begone! instantly!' commanded Dawson, throwing a shoe-brush aimed at the negro's cocoa-nut, which, fortunately, it missed.

'You didn't come it quite dat time, massa,' and Jeff left the apartment, singing:

'When a buckra man come,
Hole 'um gun up higher,
Tell a nigga shute 'im.
Nigga he tan fire.'

'Let me see,' soliloquised Dawson, bestowing a scrutinising look upon his apparel, 'I am hardly in a fit trim to be engaged in an affair of honor. This coat is rather shabby—and these pants never'll do! I need a black suit throughout. None but *gentlemen* should be engaged in such business, and how is it possible for one to be a gentleman without the assistance of a tailor? Adam was'nt a gentleman until his necessity compelled him to turn Snip. It's plain then—I can't engage in this business unless I devise ways and means to sport a more genteel exterior. Query—how can it be obtained? I'm deep in the books of almost every tailor in the city. I'll take a look over this paper,' continued Dawson, taking up a penny daily, 'and see if I cannot discover the advertisement of some new es-

tablishment, where the proprietor is very desirous of obtaining patronage. Here's Wilson, Motley, Mears, Driscoll—never'll do—I don't even pretend to venture near their doors, and it makes me tremble whenever I hear their names mentioned. Here's —let me see—"Oak-Hall—fashionable—dog cheap—warranted—Sim——" &c.—Bless my stars—the very place—I'll bestow my *patronage* there, and trust to luck in getting the habiliments on my back. So far, good; but there's another desideratum to make the character of a gentleman complete —money!—I'm not the possessor of a fip—Gentlemen should'nt be engaged in duels with empty pockets—it's worth a man's reputation. Ha! ha! I have it—I'll borrow of Sumpter—he'll bleed freely in this emergency. Now all being settled I must prepare to visit my friend.'

* * * * * * *

Evening came, and punctual to the hour Dawson entered the apartment of his friend Sumpter, who was striving to while away the tedious moments which intervened between his supper and the time appointed for meeting his amiable friend, by snapping percussion caps with a pair of pistols which he had that day purchased.

'Ah! you have come!' exclaimed Sumpter, as Dawson entered. 'Ned, my dear fellow, give us your hand. I am overjoyed to see you, particularly at this critical time.'

'Thank you; I am pleased to find you in such good spirits,' remarked Dawson, as he seated himself in a luxurious rocking chair, and placed his feet upon an ottoman before him. 'Comfortable, by Jove! Now if I only had my hookah! Sumpter, do you keep such a thing as a pipe about the premises?'

'No, but here's some capital Havana cigars.'

'Pooh! cigars—insipid. You should smoke a pipe, Sumpter. Get a hookah, like mine—some Turkish tobacco and a little opium, and I'll fix you a luxury fit for the gods.'

'Do take a cigar, Ned—they are excellent I assure you.'

'I suppose I must, if you have nothing better. Now, George, about the duel!'

'Capital! isn't it?'

'I should say glorious? There's no gammon about it, is there, Sumpter?'

'None at all—a *bona fide* challenge—no apology, and no flinching.'

'Good! Who's the happy man?' asked Dawson.

'Cadet Merrill!'

'Better yet. I've seen the fellow. Good pluck, keen eye, and a perfect gentleman. Couldn't be better matched. He's got the nerve and the sight for a duellist!'

'Are you joking in regard to this Cadet, or are you serious?' remarked Sumpter with a slightly faltering voice.

'Serious, by Jupiter; I wish myself his antagonist.'

'It is time that I had his answer; perhaps the fellow will not fight?'

'Fight! he's all fight! You couldn't bluff him off with a four inch howitzer loaded with grape shot!'

'Do you really think so, Dawson?

'Think so? Know so! How long is it since you despatched the challenge?'

'Since nine o'clock, this morning.'

'It is time that you had received his acceptance. Such matters ought never to be delayed a moment. Punctilio is the word in affairs of honor! Were it my case, three-fourths of a second should not be unnecessarily lost.'

'Well, well, we must be patient, Ned. If it comes at all we shall surely receive it this evening. In the meanwhile let's have a jovial time over a bottle or two of champagne!'

Wine and refreshments were ordered, and our young southern bloods regaled themselves most bountifully. They passed a very merry evening, and from the peculiar actions of Sumpter, it was very evident that the exhilarating properties of the champagne had their due effect upon his noddle. Dawson drank deeply, but his habits were sure proof against becoming intoxicated on what he termed so simple a beverage as champagne; he saw its effect upon Sumpter and his mind changed from thoughts of the duel to his friend's purse.

The evening was now far advanced, and Ned was about to introduce the subject of

finance, when a rap upon the door interrupted his intention.

'Come in!' halloed Sumpter.

A servant entered and placed in his hand a letter.

'By Jupiter! 'tis from Merrill!' exclaimed Dawson. 'I know his hand-writing. He's the boy for a bit of a brush!'

'Think so?' enquired Sumpter, attempting to break the seal!

'What's the matter? Your hand trembles! You've got the palsy! Give me the document!' and snatching it from his hand Dawson opened it and read aloud as follows:

"FRIDAY EVENING, 10 O'CLOCK.

George Sumpter:

Sir—Enclosed is a communication addressed to me, purporting to be from you. Believing that you are too much of a gentleman to show such a lack of good sense, good breeding and common decency, to have indicted this missive, I return it that you may be enabled to punish whoever has attempted to compromise your reputation by counterfeiting your autograph to such a low and insulting document.

(Signed) EUGENE MERRILL."

'H—ll and furies!' exclaimed Sumpter in a rage.

'Cool, by Jupiter!' added Dawson.

'Vengeance! I swear!'

'This letter, I admit, is sufficient to provoke a war between two nations! But let's see, George, how your challenge reads.'

Dawson unfolded the enclosed and read the sanguinary billet.

'I perceive,' resumed Dawson, 'you do not understand the phraseology, *duello*. This never'll do! You must apologise for this; you must, by Jupiter! and I'll dictate it!'

'Never!' shouted Sumpter, striking the table heavily with his clenched fist.

'It is the only honorable course.'

'By heavens! I scorn the suggestion! This is insult upon insult! The fellow's a cowardly puppy, and I'll post him as such This, Ned, it is apparent, is a miserable subterfuge He shan't escape me thus!'

'Go it, George! good pluck, by Jupiter!'

'I'll pursue him till I annihilate him—the miserable poltroon!'

'Better still! "Keep your courage to the sticking point!" But, really, George, your note to him is not just the thing! and I see no good grounds for proclaiming him a poltroon until you fix the matter of the challenge aright. Then if he refuse to fight you can properly do so.'

'Ned, I cannot agree with you. I'm resolved not to allow him another opportunity to insult me. I'll forthwith bruit it about the city that he's a pusillanimous scoundrel and a puppy!'

'It will never do, George, depend upon it. Better listen to my advice and again challenge him.'

'Never! He's a coward! his answer proves it, and the world shall know it.'

'Then there's to be no duel after all?' enquired Dawson, sorrowfully.

'What can be the use of urging a coward to fight?'

'Well, well, act your pleasure; but, really I feel sadly disappointed.'

'Oh, I'll have ample revenge; be assured of that. I'll humble the pride of this military upstart. If posting him a coward be not efficacious, I'll raw-hide him in public, There are various ways in which I can accomplish my ends.'

'I wish you success with all my heart. It's getting late and I must be going.'

'Never mind; let's make a night of it,' said Sumpter, again filling up the glasses.

'I must decline, George. I'll take one glass, and then, good night. By the way, what's the amount of that mem. check I gave you last week?'

'Ten dollars!'

'Is that all? make it twenty and fork over an X. I've got a trifle to make out in the morning. You shall have it again the first remittance I receive from the old gent.'

'Certainly, Ned, I am ever happy to do you a favor. I've nothing but a fifty dollar note by me; have you the change?'

'Oh, never mind, my dear fellow; make the mem. sixty, and the next time we meet I'll give you a check on my banker for the amount.'

'Just as well Ned,' said Sumpter, as he handed over the fifty dollar note, and received Dawson's memorandum check in exchange.

'Good night, George, keep cool in regard to the duel. Send for me if any thing important transpires.'

'I'll do so; good night, Ned.'

Mr. Ned Dawson left the lodgings of his friend, and with a more important bearing than he had assumed for a long time, pursued his way homeward, greatly elated with his unexpected success in besieging the pockets of his friend.

Sumpter retired to his bed in a more quiet frame of mind than he had experienced for the past twenty four hours. He soon fell into a slumber undisturbed by any vision of 'hair-triggers.'

On the next day Dawson visited 'Oak Hall,' and carried into effect his scheme. He came forth fully clad in new habiliments, leaving nothing behind save a bundle of threadbare garments, and his autograph, the latter of which may be purchased by any connoisseur in such matters for a very trifling sum.

CHAPTER III.

Eugene receives a Lieutenant's Commission. Interesting Interview. The Sealed Package. The valuable Casket. Love triumphant.

'I would have thee gone,
And yet no further than a wanton's bird;
Who lets it hop a little from her hand,
Like a poor prisoner in his twisted gyves;
And with a silk thread plucks it back again,
So loving-jealous of his liberty.' JULIET.

FOUR weeks had now elapsed since Cadet Merrill received and returned the insulting challenge mentioned in the previous chapter. Meanwhile he had been to West Point, graduated, and received a second lieutenant's commission in the fourth regiment of artillery, with instructions to report himself in sixty days to his commanding officer at Harper's Ferry, where the regiment was awaiting orders to march and join the army in Florida. Merrill returned to Boston, determining to spend the time allotted him in visiting his friends; but there was a particular object which attracted him hither again, which he dared not acknowledge even to himself.

His furlough had now nearly expired, during which time he had not seen Sumpter, his vindictive rival; neither had he seen the beautiful object which had occupied almost exclusively his sleeping and waking dreams; he ventured near the mansion of Mr. Stanwood many times, but he had not courage to enter; he felt that by so doing, he might be deemed an intruder, for from the many rumors which had come to his ears, he considered Effie the affianced of George Sumpter; but there was a feeling in his heart which prompted him not to leave the city without first seeking an interview with her, and if nothing more could be accomplished, he might lift a warning voice against the unprincipled and dangerous man who was striving by every artifice he could invent to undermine his character, and thereby alienate the affections of Effie from him, and thus render the success of his own desires the easier to be accomplished.

With these views, upon the evening prior to his departure, and with a heart agitated by conflicting emotions, he repaired to the residence of Mr. Stanwood. Fortunately, and contrary to his expectations, he found Effie alone; and the joy which glistened in her tearful eye, and the slight blush which mantled on her lovely cheek, told him that he was indeed welcome.

THE DUEL.

Small sword combat between Lieutenants Lee and Sumpter, and timely interference of Merrill.

'Eugene!' said she, surprised and pleased, as she came forward and extended her delicate hand. 'I am very happy that you have come.'

'I thank you, Effie!' was Eugene's only reply; but he felt as if he could have fallen upon his knees at the moment and worshipped her.

'Be seated!' said she, as she led him to a luxurious couch.

'I ought to be angry with you,' resumed Effie, when they were seated, 'for not calling here before. I have heard that you have been in town several weeks.'

'It is true, Effie, if you'll allow me still to call you by your Christian name.'

'It would sound stiff and formal to be called by any other, particularly by *you*, Eugene. I certainly should find it difficult to say 'Mister Merrill' every time I addressed you. But why have you not been to our house before; you formerly came here quite often; you must have nearly forgotten us.'

'Nay, Effie; be assured that it has not been in consequence of a want of inclination.'

'I am glad of that; pray, then, what makes you such a stranger?'

'Listen, and I will tell you frankly, Effie,' said Merrill with an air of seriousness. 'I learn that Mr. Sumpter solicits your hand in marriage; and that your father has sanctioned his wishes. Supposing that your society would be chiefly monopolized by him, I did not wish to be considered intrusive in making you frequent visits.'

'Nay, nay, Eugene, this is too severe.'

'But is it not true, or have I been misinformed?'

'That he has been here frequently I cannot deny; but that he has received from me the slightest encouragement to continue his visits, I also deny.'

'Then, excuse me Effie, if I have suspected wrongly; but your father——'

'Yes, yes—I know—I confess—he would marry me to one whom I can never love,' said the lovely maiden, the tears starting from her eyes.

'Would to Heaven that he were worthy your love!' exclaimed Merrill.

'Were he the most perfect of beings, I could not love him; but——' hesitated Effie, still sobbing.

'Yes, yes, I understand, but I trust that your parent's eyes may yet be opened,' remarked Merrill. 'To-morrow morning I must bid adieu to my native city; whether a final one or not Heaven only can foretell; but ere I did so I deemed it but an act of justice on my part to acquaint you with an incident that occured some six weeks since, in order that, if you felt disposed, you might communicate it to your father, that he might know one of the dark and prominent traits in the character of George Sumpter, ere he allowed you to become his bride.'

'*His* bride?' ejaculated Effie, indignantly.

'I must speak plainly, Effie, for by the sweet tie of affection which once bound our mothers together, and by the hours we have happily passed together in childhood, I claim a friend's if not a brother's right to point out the defects of him who would be thy husband; for not only has he gained your father's consent, but he openly boasts that in one year Effie Stanwood will be his wife.'

'Never!' exclaimed Effie. 'My father would not——'

'He could not, did he know this Sumpter as I know him, interrupted Merrill. 'He is the associate of gamblers, and dissolute and dissipated men. And to give you evidence of one damning trait in his character, read this;' said he, producing a copy of the challenge which Sumpter had sent him, and placing it in Effie's hands. 'You will perceive that he regards the practice of duelling as honorable, and the only proper mode of redressing a grievance.'

'Surely, my father cannot know of this,' replied Effie, after perusing the challenge. 'He is a prominent member of the Peace Society, and abominates this criminal practice. With your permission, Eugene, I will keep this and show it to him.'

'Certainly, Effie.'

'But,' resumed she, her countenance for an instant betraying alarm, 'you did not meet him?'

'No! I preferred the stigma which might, in base minds, be temporarily attached to

me, rather than to countenance a practice which my conscience must ever condemn. I have been taught to consider a duellist as a murderer; aye, one who premeditates murder, who even exposes that life which his Maker has given him for the avowed purpose of shooting down his brother man! On the contrary, Sumpter has been taught to believe that duelling is honorable, and that the only proper mode to adjust a difficulty, is either to shoot his antagonist or be shot himself! Although my profession is that of arms, may God forbid that I should ever have provocation to stand before an enemy, single handed, and in hostile array.'

'Thanks! thanks! Eugene!' cried the beautiful girl in joyous tones. 'Your sentiments are truly noble. Ever cherish such views, and although the few may affect to contemn, yet the wise and truly good will ever applaud thee.'

These words touched a chord in the heart of the young officer, and his countenance betrayed that renewed hope had been awaked within him.

'Dearest Effie,' said he, taking her small hand within his own; 'thy counsel alone would have decided me, had I not before cherished those views which you term noble. And now, Effie, ere I leave you, I have but one request to make. I know that it will be deemed strange, and one that I ought not to ask at the present crisis. But ere you decide give it full consideration.—To-morrow I leave my native city and all that I love in this world. I am ordered to join the regiment, to which I am attached, on an expedition to Florida. Those who have not become acclimated to the impure atmosphere of that section of country hazard their lives in going thither; besides, there are battles to be fought with the sanguinary savages, and, doubtless, many of our army will find a grave in that soil ere the war is at an end. I may be one of that number, and, perchance, this may be the last time I shall ever see thee!'

'Nay, nay, Eugene; talk not thus; you must not go; you are not compelled to go where so many perils will surround you!'

'You could not wish me to be such a poltroon as to throw up my commission because a post of danger is assigned me. No, no, Effie, were I certain that my life were to be sacrificed, I should not falter in the discharge of my duties. By this time to-morrow I shall be far away. Before I leave I have one duty to perform; that done, I can leave contentedly. With your assent only can this duty be done satisfactorily to myself.'

'Name your wishes, Eugene; I can refuse you nothing within my power to grant.'

'You are aware, Effie, that I have no parents, no sister, no brother; neither have I a friend in whom I can bestow an important trust save you.'

'No brother?' ejaculated Effie. 'You had a brother in the Navy?'

'Alas! he too is dead!'

'You surprise me; this must be a recent event?'

'Yes; he died at Havana of the yellow fever but a few weeks since.' And now, Effie, hear my request,' continued Eugene, producing a sealed package. 'This package is of great value to me, and to your keeping I wish to entrust it until my return. Should you, peradventure, hear of my death, break the seal, and peruse the documents which you will therein find.'

'I cannot, I dare not receive a trust which you confess is valuable; and yet I would gladly do any thing in my power to serve you.'

'Thanks, generous girl; then you will not refuse me this.'

'You surely have many friends, Eugene, to whom this trust might be more properly consigned.'

'In truth, I know of no one.'

'But——' and Effie hesitated.

'But what?' he eagerly enquired.

'I have one serious objection.'

'Pray, what can that be?'

'Should you never return? Oh, Eugene! consider,' and tears again fell upon her fair cheek.'

'In that event lies all the necessity of making such a disposition of it.'

'But you require me to open it, in case I hear of——— Nay, nay, Eugene, I cannot. Take it to some one who will safely keep it for you.'

'I would not urge it, Effie, did you advance one cogent reason for refusing. Furthermore, I have no time now to dispose of it otherwise.'

'Then, I will take the package;' replied she; 'and I pray to Heaven that I may never have cause to unseal it.'

'God will bless thee for thy kindness,' and he pressed her hand to his lips, and uttered 'farewell!'

'Go not yet!' cried she; and she threw her arms fondly about his neck and wept.'

Moments fleeted by and not a word was spoken; there were sighs and tears; and two hearts that beat in unison rapidly and warmly; two hearts that loved and fervently loved, but that love had never been expressed in words. Never did a more beautiful being than Effie Stanwood recline in the arms of a nobler or handsomer perthan Eugene Merrill.

'Effie,' at length spake the young officer in a half audible tone.

'Eugene!' responded the lovely creature, looking with pride into his manly countenance, while her eyes beamed with the fire of affection.'

'This is the happiest moment of my life,' said he, as he returned her fond gaze, and kissed her crimson cheek. 'Can I really believe that I am beloved by thee? Do I realize that which I had fondly but faintly hoped? Does the affection which fires my heart find a response in thine? Do you indeed love me?'

'It is useless to dissemble. I do!' replied the blushing girl promptly, but at the same moment hiding her lovely features upon his breast.

'Dearest Effie, I must again bid thee adieu.'

'Go not away, I beseech thee,' said she, imploringly. 'For my sake, dear Eugene, expose not the precious life which God has given thee!'

'It is indeed bitter to part at this time. Would that I might remain; but my honor, my reputation is at stake, and I must go wherever duty calls.'

'For thy honor, Eugene, I would have thee go; and yet for thy safety I would have thee stay; for I have a vague presentiment that I shall never look upon thy face again.'

'Fear not, but cheer up, Effie; this weakness becomes us not,' said Merrill, resolutely. 'The perils and dangers of this life are not confined alone to those who fight their country's battles; all are subject to fatal catastrophes, when they deem themselves far, far away from scenes of peril!'

'Stay a little longer,' said she, still clinging to him.

'Nay, Effie, it is late, and I would not be discovered here by your father. Again, farewell!'

'Tarry but a moment, and be seated. I, too, have a request to make. Wait until I return.'

Saying which she hastened from the parlor, and in a few moments again appeared, bearing in her hands a gold chain, appended to which was a small casket, of the same metal, and studded with jewels.

'My request, dear Eugene, is simply this, that you wear this about your neck, and never allow it to be removed by any hands but mine.'

'I comply with the greatest pleasure.—What is it?'

'That you must not know,' resumed Effie; nor must you allow your curiosity to be gratified until you are far away from the city. Do you promise to comply.'

'I do, indeed, my best beloved.'

'Now, remember,' said Effie, again repeating the restrictions; you are not to remove it yourself, nor suffer it to be removed, unless by my hands; and you are not to allow yourself to open the casket until you reach the place to which you are destined.'

'I will faithfully do as you bid me, and the casket, whatever it may contain, shall be my chief treasure while I absent from thee.'

Effie, with her own hands, placed the chain about his neck, and the mysterious treasure rested nearest his heart.

'God bless thee! Farewell!' exclaimed Eugene.

The lovers embraced—moments elapsed and not a word was spoken. Tears, bitter tears flooded their cheeks. The struggle was a hard one—their lips met for the first time—he tore himself from her embrace and rushed in a frenzied manner from the apartment, while she sank faintingly upon the couch!

As Merrill passed the outer door of the mansion he met Mr. Stanwood, in company with his profligate rival, the former of whom coldly saluted him, while the other cast a malignant look upon him, and with a smile of contempt, through his clenched teeth, uttered the words, 'villain! coward! you have dared again to cross my path! you shall yet feel my just resentment!'

The epithets, 'villain! coward!' only reached the ears of the young officer, but they were like dagger points thrust into his heart. But he passed on, unheedingly, while Sumpter entered the mansion where he had that moment torn himself away from the very idol of his soul!

CHAPTER IV.

Interview between Mr. Stanwood and Sumpter. The Compact. The Southerner's singular freak. 'He would be a Soldier.'

'And oft his smooth and bridled tongue
Would give the lie to his flushing cheek,
He was a coward to the strong.
He was a tyrant to the weak.'

WHILE our young lieutenant is pursuing his way towards the noble and venerable mansion of his ancestors, which he had inherited from his father, who had died but one year previously, we will follow Mr. Stanwood and his would be son-in-law into the same apartment, which was the scene of the incidents of our last chapter. Effie was still reclining upon the sofa, partially recovered, and her face was still bathed in tears.

'Dear Effie,' said her father in tones of kindness, 'you weep; what means this grief?'

'Good evening, Miss Effie,' said Sumpter, unceremoniously advancing. 'I am sorry to find thee thus. I suspect the cause; the visit of that cowardly cadet has something to do with this grief.'

'But the pusillanimous scoundrel would not dare insult a———'

'Nay, nay, dear father, speak not so harshly,' interrupted Effie, aroused by these words. 'The gentleman who has just left me is incapable of acting as you would intimate.'

'With all due deference to the lady's belief,' replied Sumpter, mildly, 'I can bear testimony to the contrary. I know him to be a dissipated, profligate, insolent fellow; and I here proclaim him unworthy the name of gentleman, and therefore unworthy of her confidence and esteem.'

'I have no doubt of it,' added Mr. Stanwood. 'This is not the first time I have heard it declared.'

''Tis base slander!' replied Effie, her deep blue eye, lighting up with the fire of an indignant spirit. 'Father, you are deceived! Read this letter,' she continued, handing him Sumpter's missive to Merrill; 'it will confirm one point in the character of him who slanders the innocent.'

'Really, Miss Stanwood, you are too severe;' remarked Sumpter, unconcernedly. 'Time will cure this error.'

'Can I believe my own senses?' ejaculated Mr. Stanwood, still perusing the letter.

'A challenge to mortal combat! and signed George Sumpter? How's this? it purports to be a challenge from you to Eugene Merrill.'

'Indeed?' exclaimed Sumpter, receiving the letter from Mr. Stanwood, and hastily glancing over it. 'Ha! ha! this is a new invention of my enemy! I marvel much what is to come next. Mr. Stanwood, look again at this singular document; you who know my hand-writing well, should have discovered at a glance that it is none of mine!'

'True, true, now I look, it bears not the slightest resemblance to your writing; why it must be a forgery?'

'It is indeed a forgery! a damnable scheme to undermine my reputation in your estimation and in that of this young lady!' declared Sumpter, with an air of assumed anger.

'Yes, yes! I see it all!' said Mr. Stanwood.

'Father, you are again deceived!' said Effie. 'Mr. Merrill said it was but a copy of the original!'

'A copy? marvellous, truly!' said Sumpter, sneeringly. 'What miserable, petty artifices do weak-minded men call to their aid to conceal one monstrous crime! A copy, forsooth! Why, where then is the original? Surely, a fool could not believe that one would use a counterfeit check or other document while in his possession he retained the original! The idea is preposterous in the extreme!'

'Mr. Sumpter,' replied Effie, with an air of offended dignity. 'It becomes not you to inquire for the original, when you know that you have it in your own possession, Mr. Merrill having informed me that he returned it soon after receiving it.'

'He's a liar and a villain!' exclaimed Sumpter, furiously enraged, 'and were he here, I'd proclaim him as such to his face.'

Effie could hear no more, and bidding her father 'good night,' she left the parlor and sought the solitude of her own chamber, when the varied scenes of the evening were recalled to her mind. Pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, were commingled together, agitating her mind so intensely, that sleep did not close her eyelids until long after the midnight hour had passed.

'It is as I have long suspected,' remarked Mr. Stanwood to Sumpter, after his daughter had quitted the apartment. 'Effie loves the young officer.'

'So it appears,' answered Sumpter. 'If I am to be superseded in her affections by any one, I trust it may be by a person who is deserving her hand. United to such a man as this upstart cadet, her life would be miserable indeed.'

'Are you fully convinced of the truth of all the reports concerning Merrill's character?'

'I have proof conclusive.'

'Heretofore he ranked high in the estimation of all who knew him; aad at West Point he stood high on the list of graduates, at the close of the last term.'

'All this may be very true; yet, were it not his intention to leave the city to-morrow you might have the additional evidence of your own senses.'

'Yes, yes, it must be true! If he ventures here again I must give him notice that his visits are not agreeable. And I assure you that my daughter shall not again see him. She is sensitive and easily effected, but by to-morrow she will appear as blithe as a bird and as beautiful as a blushing rose.'

'I fear this fellow has made a too deep impression upon her tender and susceptible heart.'

'Pooh! pooh! nonsense! it will be all over by to-morrow I tell you.'

'Think so?'

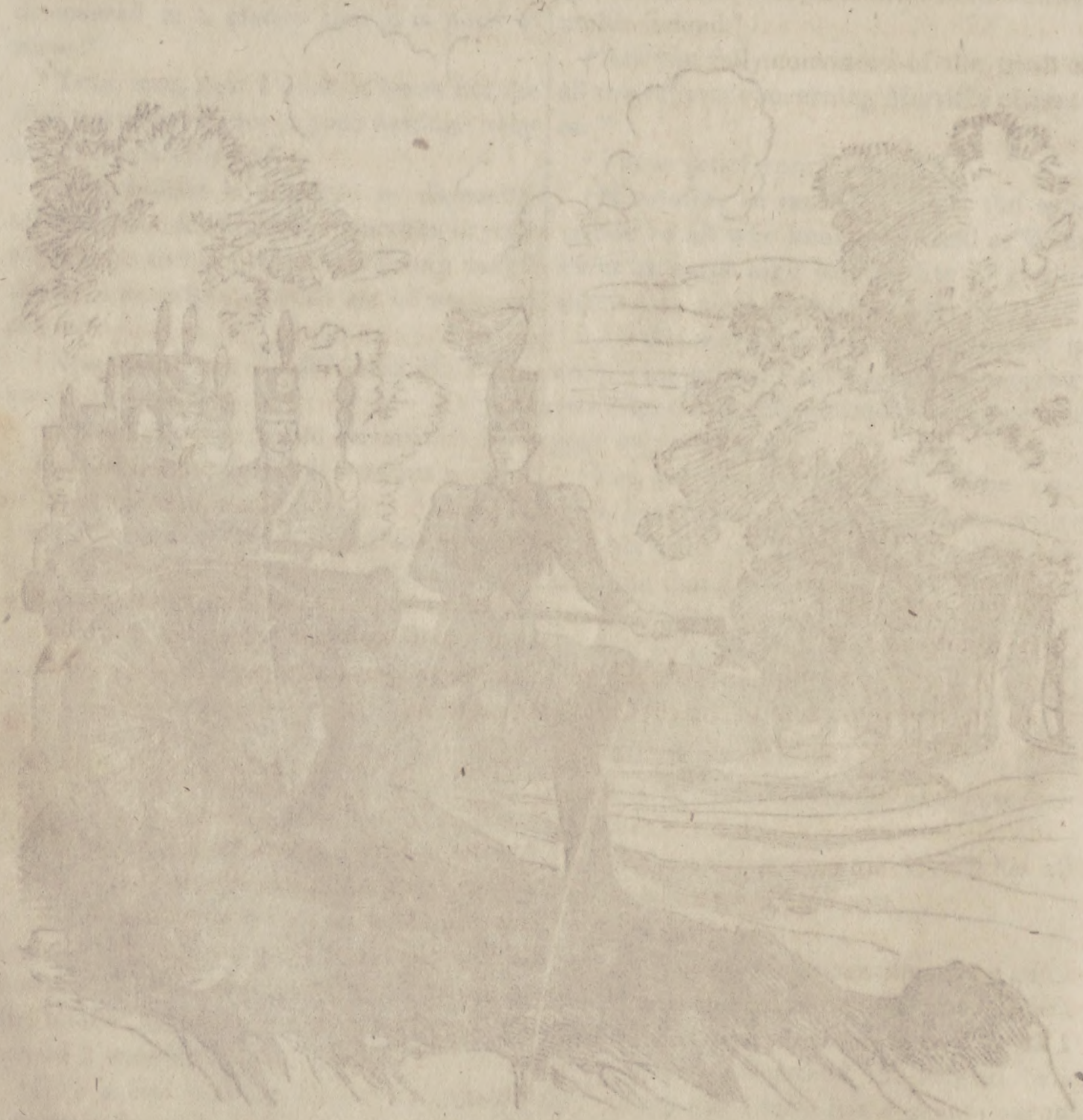
'I am sure of it. I understand the girl's disposition too well to be mistaken. When you have lived in the world as long as I have you will understand the women better. In my day I have had a great deal to do with the fair creatures although I never was—— that is to say: when Effie's fa—— confound my stupidity what am I talking about? When Effie's mother was of her age she was precisely like her.'

'How long is it since her mother died?' asked Sumpter.

'Fifteen years. Effie was not then quite two years of age.'

THE BATTLE.

Heroic conduct of Lieut. Merrill in the desperate Engagement between the Americans and Seminoles near the Ouithlacoochee.



'She is then scarcely seventeen, now?'

'No. She was left by her—that is, she was left in charge of a nurse, who died when Effie was five years of age. Since that period she has been brought up directly under my own eyes. I have used every means to give her a superior education; and I know of no young lady of her age who is mistress of so many accomplishments.'

'I have often remarked,' replied Sumpter 'that Effie Stanwood would shine among the most gifted ladies of our land.'

'Yes, yes, I doubt it not; my conscience s easy on that point—but—but——' stammered Mr. Stanwood,' 'we will now conclude the business which has brought us together.'

'With all my heart,' replied Sumpter, taking from his pocket an unsealed packet. 'You still adhere to all the particulars as herein stated?'

'Most religiously!'

'Let us then understand each other before we sign and seal our compact. In the first place, by virtue of this document, you are to give me the hand of your beautiful daughter in marriage?'

'I so understand it.'

'On the day of our nuptials you are to pay into my hands the sum of five thousand dollars as my bride's dowry.'

'That is the sum.'

'In consideration of which I am to bind myself by a solemn oath never to reveal a certain secret concerning the parentage of Effie, which I have learned in the office of Mr. Singleton, and to take no advantage of that secret until after your decease?'

'Yes. You promise thus to bind yourself?'

'Most solemnly.'

'There is another consideration which must be scrupulously adhered to,' said Mr. Stanwood.

'Yes, yes, I have overlooked it. Immediately after our marriage we are to remove to the south, where we must reside until after your death. Is this important, Mr. Stanwood?'

'Our compact cannot be concluded without this consideration.'

'Very well, I comply with all these conditions.'

'And so do I.'

'When shall the wedding take place?'

'I care not how soon. And yet I would give my daughter ample time to prepare for the event, as well as for the purpose of effacing from her mind every thought of Merrill, that her attention may be diverted towards you.'

'I leave the appointment of the time entirely to you.'

'I would suggest one year.'

'Then one year let it be. Meanwhile I will visit the south and acquaint my parents with my intention; and if time admits I propose to visit Florida for the sole purpose of chastising that presumptuous villain who has dared so often to cross my path. On your part I suppose you will exert your best endeavors to cause your daughter to despise the epauletted coward, and I will furnish abundant material for effecting this change.'

'Are you not aware, Mr. Sumpter, that these epauletted gentlemen, as you term them, have great attraction in the eyes of the ladies.'

'True, but do you suppose that such is the case with Effie?'

'I doubt it not; a laced coat, bright gilt buttons, upon a figure with the dignity and gracefulness of a well educated and well disciplined officer, are quite enough to turn the head of any young lady. Mr. Sumpter you should have chosen arms for your profession. You have the true bearing of a military gentleman.'

'You flatter me; but really I have often wished that I was a soldier. I might have had my choice, for my father's station in the War Department gives him no small influence with the 'powers that be' at the Capitol Even now I might get a commission by asking for it; that is, what is termed a citizen appointment; but then I should

be attached to the Infantry, the lowest rank of corps in the army. But what of that? an officer's rank and privileges are the same whether attached to the Infantry, Artillery, or Dragoon corps! By Jove, I'll have one!'

'Have what?'

'A commission to be sure! I'll write to the old gent to-morrow. I'll see if I can't sport gilt lace and bright buttons as well as one who has plodded along for four years at the Academy.'

'You cannot be serious?'

'Never was so in my life. It may delay my marriage a short period. And if I get tired of the army, why, I can throw up my commission and again take up Coke and Blackstone.'

'I applaud your resolution. One laurel at least will be added to your brow in Effie's estimation.'

'Then my mind is made up. You shall hear from me as soon as I receive my commission. So, good night, Mr. Stanwood My compliments to Effie.'

In great haste, as though every moment was essential to carry into effect his strange and sudden resolution, he rushed from the house, and ere he went to his own lodgings, he called upon his friend Dawson and surprised him with the intelligence of this singular freak.

CHAPTER IV.

An Inclement Night. The Attorney braves the Tempest. The Extortioner and his Victim. A Dreadful Mystery Unravelled. The Will. The Deeds. Departure of the Attorney. Another Nocturnal Visitor. Despair. Remorse. The Orphan Girl's Discovery.

'Thou art a villain damned.'

UPON a dark and tempestuous night, some four or five weeks subsequent to the interview of Mr. Stanwood and Sumpter, when the Storm-King in his violence and wrath was abroad, venting his fury upon the steeples, cupolas, and huge piles of brick and granite of our beloved city—the rain pouring in torrents—the lightnings vividly flashing, and the thunders crashing and rumbling as if the firmament was being rent in twain—a night so awful that none were abroad, not even the watchful guardians of the city, who deserted their posts and crept under the porticos or arches of dwellings to shelter themselves from the raging of the tempest—a night that required nerves of steel and hearts of iron to brave the furious elements—that an old man, or one who had passed the meridian of life, sat at an open window of a small apartment in a house contiguous to the Old South Church. He looked forth as if defying the terrors of the storm; and as the lightning hurled forth its dreadful bolt, illuminating the wild scene, a fiendish smile would steal across his inauspicious visage, and words of dire import would occasionally fall from his lips. Presently the heavy tones of the church clock, striking the midnight hour, commingled its shrill sounds with the deeper tones of the elements.

'The hour has come! and I must forth!' exclaimed he. 'Roll on ye thunders! ye lightnings flash! pour ye torrents, and ye wild winds blow on! Drive all timid fools within doors, that I may revel alone in your sublime glory! This is my harvest time! I work while men are hushed in sleep! I like not the glare and heat of day! My work must be done in hours like these! I must be forth! On this night there is much to be done! The golden fool ere now awaits my coming.'

Thus concluding his grandiloquent soliloquy, the Attorney, for such was his profession, opened a small iron chest, which stood in one corner of the narrow room, and took therefrom a package of papers, which he carefully secreted beneath his vest. Then placing upon his greyish head a leathern

cap with a cape, not unlike those worn by firemen, and buttoning a storm coat closely about him, he noiselessly unlocked the door, and relocking it upon the outside he put the key into his pocket, and cautiously descended a long flight of spiral stairs and issued into the street. Stealthily he glided along beneath the eaves of buildings to screen himself as much as possible from the drenching rain. At length he halted at the gate of a noble mansion, which he opened and ascended the steps reaching to the front entrance. Instead of ringing the bell he gave a gentle but distinct rap upon the door, which was promptly answered by a gentleman about forty years of age, of an aristocratic and proud bearing.

The moment the door wasopened a flash of vivid lightning illumined the scene, and its dreadful bolt shivered the top branches of a huge elm, which stood directly before the house! All was again darkness! It was an appalling shock, and even he who had seemed to defy the elements was terrified!

'Come in, Mr. Singleton, quickly; this is a terrible night for one to venture abroad. I scarcely believed that you would come, although I never knew you to fail in keeping an appointment.'

'You flatter me, Mr. Stanwood,' said the Attorney, fawningly. 'Surely it is a proper night for *our* business.'

'That was a dreadful thunderbolt as you entered. Did it not startle you?'

'No, I love to brave the wildest storm; the danger is not increased by having a stout heart.'

'True; walk this way.' And Mr. Stanwood conducted the Attorney to the Library room.

After a few preliminaries, of a courteous nature, the business which brought them together on this inauspicious night was fully discussed.

'Here are the deeds,' remarked the Attorney, 'and this is the original will duly attested; and you will observe that the whole of Henry Stanwood's property is bequeath-to———'

'Yes, yes, Mr. Singleton,' interrupted Mr. Stanwood, with impatience; 'I know all about it.'

'Effie Stanwood, his daughter,' continued the Attorney.

'*My* daughter, sir!'

'Ah, yes, excuse me, for by the name of Henry you are known; yes, *your* daughter!' emphatically assented the Attorney. 'You are certainly her *guardian*! and *I* am her father's *executor!*'

'Speak lower, Mr. Singleton; we may be overheard.'

'Very properly suggested,' said the Attorney in a whisper, as he drew his chair nearer that of Mr. Stanwood. 'Has no one penetrated your secret?'

'It is unknown save to yourself.'

The Attorney's countenance wore a suspicious look for he had more than once dogged his pupil's steps to the house of Mr. Stanwood. Assuming a satisfied air, he at length said,

'It is well, then. And you still adhere firmly to our mutual obligations, ever to let the girl remain in ignorance as to her real paternity?'

'Does not my fortune, my reputation, ay, even my freedom from a dungeon depend upon it?'

'True, very true.'

'And the large fees you demand for your part in the villainy?'

'Small, very small, Mr. Stanwood, compared with the immense value of your deceased brother's estate.'

'I think you told me that when he died, no living witnesses were present, besides yourself and nurse?'

'Not a soul else even knew of his death.'

'And the nurse you pledged me was—'

'*Poisoned!* Yes, that's true. On that point you should rest satisfied, for it's now ten long years since that deed was done, and not even her apparition has yet appeared.'

'True; then all we have to do is to keep our own counsel and we are safe. There is a check for the five thousand dollars, the sum stipulated for your services,' said Mr. Stanwood as he placed the check in his hand. 'You are now I believe fully paid for all services rendered.'

Yes, but the will and the deeds———'

'What of them?' interrupted Stanwood.

'They are *valuable!*' significantly replied Singleton.

'Well?'

'I am the *Executor!*'

'Surely, you can have no further claim upon them?'

'And why not? I am still the Executor!'

'Mr. Singleton,' said Stanwood, sternly, 'was it not the understanding that every document relative to my brother's property should be placed in my possession?'

'It might have been the understanding but not the stipulation!'

'Of what possible value can they be to you?'

'Am I not the Executor? Is the estate yet settled?'

'But, sir, you would not forfeit——'

'The least said between *us* of that, the better,' interrupted Singleton. 'I have toiled hard for you, have kept your secrets, and for all this I confess I have been liberally paid. But these papers, they cover the whole estate—they are certainly worth *something!*'

'Vile extortioner!' exclaimed Stanwood, rising in anger. 'I demand the papers instantly!'

'Do not use harsh epithets,' coolly replied the Attorney. 'They do not well become *thee!*'

'Surrender the papers! or by Heaven you leave not this room alive!'

'Do not work thyself into a passion.'

'Villain!' exclaimed Mr. Stanwood, approaching with clenched fist. The papers or your——'

'Stand back!' commanded Singleton, producing a pocket pistol and levelling it at Stanwood's breast.

The latter recoiled at the sight of the dangerous little weapon and quickly retreating he resumed his seat upon the opposite side of the table.

'Now, Mr. Stanwood, be calm, and treat with me fairly.'

'Give me the papers and name the sum of your damnable extortion!' answered Stanwood.

'Now you talk rationally.'

'Name the amount!'

'Ten thousand dollars!'

'Ten thousand devils!' exclaimed Stanwood, thunderstruck at the large sum which the villain had presumed to name.

'It is not such a very large sum, considering the immense value of the estates which these papers represent. Not more than three per cent. The fee of Executor would amount to half the sum.'

'D—n your Executorship! Say nothing more to me of Executorship, and hand over the papers, and you shall have your money.'

'It gives me the greatest pleasure so to do,' remarked the Attorney.

Stanwood wrote a check for the amount, and angrily pushed it towards the Attorney, as the latter politely handed him the papers.

'Now villain begone, and trouble me no more!' commanded Stanwood.

'Would it not be advisable first for you to examine the documents and ascertain if all are correct?'

The papers were overhauled and after running his eye over each one of them, Mr. Stanwood pronounced them correct.

'Then our business for this evening is concluded,' remarked the Attorney as he placed his storm-hat upon his head and prepared to depart.

'Yes—and forever!' added Stanwood.

'For all past services I am amply compensated,' drily replied Singleton; 'but fo the Future we mortals do not presume to answer for.'

'How? What of the future?' asked Stanwood, suspiciously.

'Our accounts are balanced to this date. I am still burdened with a *secret* which I would not willingly reveal!'

'But you are bound by an oath?'

'Yes; an extra-judicial one. But, supposing at any future time I should be summoned before a jury to testify to what I know regarding this matter, my reputation, my conscience, would not permit me to swear falsely?'

'Your conscience! your reputation! and pray what do you consider their value?'

'To guard against emergencies like the

one I have just cited, three thousand dollars per annum would be ample.'

'You cannot be serious?—this is a jest.'

'I mean, seriously, that to keep your secret inviolable is well worth what I have named; and with this annuity you can procure silence, forever on my part, under *all* circumstances.'

'Devil! impostor!' exclaimed the astonished and enraged Stanwood. 'Sooner than comply with more of your damnable extortions I would myself reveal all.'

'What give up this princely estate?'

'It will buy me peace of conscience if nothing more.'

'But it will not save thee from the hangman?' ejaculated Singleton, eyeing his victim maliciously.

The countenance of Singleton turned pale at these portentous words, and his whole frame quivered.

'Monster!' exclaimed he, 'it was you who did it!'

'And who was the instigator? who penned the fatal letter which I hold secure in my possession? who furnished the *poison?* who paid over five thousand dollars when the deed was done?'

'Wretch! begone! You cannot sacrifice me without sacrificing yourself!'

'In that you are deceived!' replied the Attorney. 'The evidence against you is *prima facie*; and I can cause you to be convicted without even endangering my own liberty!'

'Ah! then monster will I be freed from thee by another crime, if killing such a thing as thou art can be called criminal!' And the enraged man, with a tiger's fierceness, again sprang towards his tormenting antagonist. But the coolness and self-possession of the Attorney again thwarted his murderous intention—the pistol was again levelled at his head!'

'Ha, ha!' cried Singleton, 'you had forgotten this useful little instrument? You perceive that it is useless to cope with me!'

'What mortal can cope with a fiend from hell?' ejaculated the frustrated man, as he again resumed his seat.

'A fiend!' reiterated the Attorney. 'I like the term as well as any other, if it will but aid me in my purposes. Do you now accede to my terms?' asked he calmly.

'What assurance can I have that you have no farther extortion to make?' enquired Stanwood.

'My word!'

'Thy word? I were better off without it. I will not take it?'

'My solemn oath?'

'It has been perjured too oft already.'

'It is all the assurance that I can give.'

'No, I will not take it.'

'Then, Mr. Stanwood, our conference is at an end. So I'll bid you a good night; but, remember the great secret———'

'Stay!'

'Then you do accede?'

'Yes, devil! and let me hereafter see thy accursed face as little as possible; for I may again be tempted to commit crime upon thy worthless carcase.'

'I wish you a good night, and a happy sleep,' said Singleton as he left the room.

'And I wish thee all the torments of the damned!' returned Stanwood.

* * * * * *

The Attorney was again in his narrow and solitary apartment, and after throwing off his storm-hat and coat, he took the checks which he had wrenched from his wretched victim, and examining them, he paced the room with the consequential bearing of a millionaire!

'I have done well, excellently well,' soliloquised he; 'far better than I expected; fifteen thousand in one night; besides three thousand a year; and that is not all; I have still the true will in my possession; he has a copy, *marvellously well executed!* The old nurse, too, is yet alive, though the rich fool believes her dead! True, I did administer the poisonous drug—enough to get my golden fee, but little enough to save me from committing murder, and to save me from the noose of the hangman!'

He now opened his iron chest, and for a few moments gloated over the treasures it contained. Adding his night's earnings to his mine of wealth, he locked the chest, and after carefully securing the door and window, he threw himself upon his couch, and, strange to say, slept as soundly as the

innocent and conscientious. Had that creature, in the shape of God's image, a soul?

Let us return again to the mansion of Mr. Stanwood, the princely gentlemen, as he was frequently termed. How different were his feelings from those of the unprincipled wretch who had just left him. He paced to and fro his splendid and luxurious apartment in an agony of misery—he suffered all the torments of the damned—remorse and despair, pride and avarice, anxiety and fear, were the contending emotions which harrowed up his guilty soul.

'Vile wretch!' exclaimed he, 'hell itself is too mild a place for such a fiend! I could have torn him limb from limb, and trampled his miserable carcase under my feet! Would to God I had never beheld the merciless villain! It was he who led me on! It was he who suggested the accursed plot of robbing my own brother's child, by assuming his Christian name in a foreign land, after his death, and removing his property and daughter to this city, deceiving not only the world, but herself, that she is of my own flesh and blood! It was he who led me to sanction and instigate the murder of an innocent woman to conceal a lesser crime! one whom I had first bribed to sell her own soul, and then sent to her final account with her crime unatoned, to meet the retributive vengeance of Heaven! Impious deed! Oh God! what a guilty wretch am I! I have committed crimes for which I can never atone! By blood my hands are stained, else I might repent and make reparation to the guileless maiden whom I have foully deceived and wronged, but whose life I had enough of virtue left in me to spare! though my viler confederate would have added her murder to our hellish scheme! But, I have gone too far to turn back! Thus it is ever with crime—to atone now and reveal all would not only make myself an object of public scorn and execration, but a malefactor, loaded with chains, imprisoned in a noisome dungeon, and at last dragged to the gallows to expiate my dreadful sins! Oh, horrible thought! Wretched and wicked I still must live and act on!'

His incoherent soliloquy was now interruppted by the noiseless entrance of Effie, who halted within the door; and as Mr. Stanwood beheld the figure, clad as she was in a simple robe of white, he shuddered, and falling back upon a couch, he exclaimed in affright,

'Begone! begone! out of my sight, thou tenant of the tomb!'

'Dear father,' said the gentle maiden, advancing, 'what is it that thus disturbs thee!'

'Is it you, Effie? I thought it was the apparition of your deceased mother?' said he, wiping drops of perspiration from his brow.

'Father, it is such a dreadful night, I could not sleep. The howlings of the storm without, and I have heard such strange noises within, I was afraid, and dared not close my eyes. What is the matter, father?'

'Nothing—nothing, my child—that is, I feel a slight illness.'

'You are quite ill; you look pale and your hands tremble; drops of perspiration are starting from your brow, and your eyes seem burning in their sockets. Let me call the servants, I fear you are very ill.'

'No, no, my child—go to your bed—I am much better now—I shall soon retire.'

'I dare not leave you; the physician had better be called in.'

'No, no, Effie; it's but a sudden nervous attack; it will soon be over. Go now and leave me.'

Effie obeyed and again retired to her room.

'Gracious Heavens!' exclaimed Stanwood, after she had gone, 'how much she resembled her dead mother!'

The wretched man, before retiring, brought forth a bottle of brandy, and with all the pleasure of the inebriate, he sought to drown his sorrows. He drank deeply, and, neglecting to deposite his papers in his safe, he staggered to his sleeping apartment.

The tempestuous night was succeeded by a bright and beautiful morning. The sun shone in unclouded beauty, and as its earliest beams peered through the windows of Effie's room, she arose and hastened to the library, thinking, perhaps, that her father might yet be there; but the room was

deserted, and as she entered, the first object that met her attention was the package of papers, which Mr. Stanwood had received from Singleton, and which he had neglected to conceal. Approaching the table she took up the package, and from the strangeness of the words, written legibly upon the envelope, her curiosity was excited and she ventured to open it. She there discovered the 'Last Will and Testament' of Henry Stanwood, bequeathing all his property to his only child, Effie Stanwood; and, also, the matter of investing John Stanwood, his brother, with the guardianship of Effie, and the appointment of Isaac Singleton, the Executor of the estate. Another paper, which amazed her most, was a detailed account of the death of Henry Stanwood!

Who can portray the conflicting emotions which pervaded the soul of the timid maiden when the astounding intelligence was fully revealed to her? She was too young when bereft of her only parent, to remember the dark scenes which transpired, yet she had a faint reminiscence of once being more caressed and loved than she had been in years past. She tried to penetrate the dark shadow which surrounded her early childhood days, but in vain. Time had effaced every distinct impression from her memory, and left all in gloomy doubt.—There she stood trembling and amazed! The scroll of parchment rattled in her hands! that record of her own paternity! in characters too visible to be misinterpreted!

'Oh, Heaven!' cried she, 'what a secret is here unfolded to me! Can I give credence to my own senses, or am I dreaming? Henry Stanwood, my dear father, *dead?* and he who calls me his child *not* my father, but my uncle! What means this dreadful mystery? Am I indeed without a parent? How and for what purpose can I have been so deceived? It is true he never seemed like a father to me; I never dared to kiss him, and I have never thrown my arms about his neck and told him that I loved him, as I have seen others do to their parents. But this I can now account for, for he is only my uncle! But what could have been the cause of his wild and agitated manner when I came here last night? And why is it that he has assumed my father's name? Surel there is something dark and mysterious in all this! Something which I cannot, must not, dare not investigate. Oh, Heavens! so deceived? The *will!*' continued Effie, running her eye again over the document; 'yes, the *will* bequeaths all the estates, herein mentioned, to me, and my uncle is my guardian? No mother! no father! an orphan! Yes, he will be a father to me still. 'Ah! I see how it is!' she exclaimed, her face brightening; 'he wishes to surprise me, when I become of age, by placing in my possession a princely fortune. He has surely acted as a father towards me; he has supplied me with every thing my heart could wish; has given me an accomplished education; has always treated me kindly, and———, no! he never caresses and kisses me as other fathers do their children. Ah! some one comes! Should it be he! my fa——my uncle—I am lost!'

She threw down the parchment which she held in her hand, and like a startled dove fled from the library by one door just as Mr. Stanwood entered the other. Thus she escaped detection.

The wretched man, pale and haggard from excitement and the loss of sleep, walked slowly into the room, and discovered to his surprise the important documents lying confusedly upon the table. He started back!

'Ah! what do I see?' he ejaculated. 'The will—the deeds—scattered and exposed in this manner? Impossible! I could not have been so careless! And yet, I do not recollect of concealing them before I went to bed! It must be so—the fumes of the intoxicating liquor, together with my agitated mind, caused this strange incautiousness. Effie cannot have been here, for this is earlier than is her custom to appear in the morning; and the servants—they are too ignorant to be able to read and understand these matters. It must be my own careless act.'

Saying which he gathered up the papers, and carefully sealing the envelope, he deposited the package in his double-doored safe. This done, he threw himself upon a couch, and endeavored to compose his disturbed mind to sleep.

Effie, with that curiosity which prompts not only her sex but that of our own, when that which we seek to know directly concerns us, returned softly to an adjoining room, through which she passed in her hasty flight, and the door leading into the library being slightly ajar, she was enabled to see his surprise on discovering the confusion of the papers. Trembling she stood and heard his words! She saw the guilty apprehension which gleamed in his wild and distorted eyes! She saw the papers sealed by his hand and placed in the iron-safe! She watched with eager attention each secret spring as it was touched, each bolt as it was pushed into its socket; and when the doors were locked, she saw the hiding place of the key, as it was deposited therein!

Having thus gained the most important information she could have required, she again sought her room, and there each circumstance, each startling development, of the few past hours, revolved in her mind over and over again in wonderful array.

She threw herself in a prayerful attitude and invoked the blessing of God! She prayed to Him for guidance and protection in this her first trial, and beseeched Him to cause her uncle to walk in the path of rectitude and duty!

We must now, for a time, go abroad, and watch the movements of other important personages of our 'ower true tale.'

CHAPTER IV.

The Florida Campaign. March to Tampa Bay. Skirmishing with the Seminoles. Arrival of George Sumpter with a Lieutenant's Commission. Heroic Conduct of Lieut. Merrill. The Duel. Timely Interference of our Hero. Sumpter's Defeat and Disgrace. Court Martial. The Result.

'They had left their homes, their friends so true,
With blessings and tears from each one they knew,
With manly hearts through the wilds to go,
And rid the land of a savage foe.'

ANOTHER season had passed away; the sultry heat of summer was exchanged for the more genial breezes of the glorious months of autumn. During this period the situations of several who compose our *dramatis personæ*, had become essentially different from the positions in which we last left them. The young lieutenant, Eugene Merrill, had joined the regiment to which he was to report himself, and entered with alacrity upon the duties of his station. Five months had elapsed since the arrival of the troops in Florida; and this period of time had been employed in traversing the forests and dense swamps, and in fording the rivers of this unhealthful climate, in pursuit of the Seminole Indians, under the guidance of the indefatigable and valorous Osceola. They had encountered, in their long and weary march, their savage foe almost daily, but nothing like a general battle had yet ensued, although some severe skirmishing had taken place, by which many of our bravest troops had fallen.—How many savages were killed in these conflicts, never could be ascertained; for it was a shrewd policy, on the part of the Seminoles, never to allow the pale faces to know the numbers of their dead; and in case of defeat or retreat, they would invariably bear the dead or wounded away, or conceal them in the dense hammocks or deep sluices, places with which the country abounds, and which proved in most cases impenetrable to our troops. We have been informed by a gallant officer, who served throughout nearly all the campaigns, that he never saw a dead Indian while in Florida, although he had witnessed scores of them fall while in battle; and he cited the reason that we have named above.

The hardships and sufferings of the American army, as is well known to many of our readers, were intense in the extreme; being obliged to undergo a forced march by day, and at night to bivouac in places, exposed to nocturnal attacks from the savages. It is well known that when they reached

Tampa Bay, they were in a sickly, destitute and truly deplorable condition. At this post they went into garrison, where they remained several months.

George Sumpter, strange to relate, had in one important matter kept his word. He, too, now sported a pair of silver epaulettes, a laced coat, and a sword by his side. He had received, through the official influence of his sire, a 'citizen appointment' of Second Lieutenant, by brevet, in the –th Regiment, U. S. Infantry, and was sent to Tampa Bay, in charge of a company of raw recruits, in a vessel which sailed from Baltimore. The regiment to which he was attached belonged to the same division of the army as that of Lieut. Merrill, and on the arrival of the raw recruits, which happened soon after the army had reached the post, they were garrisoned in the same barracks with the main body.

A week or two had elapsed after the arrival of the recruits, before Sumpter and Merrill had met, although each knew of the other's presence, but not a word or a look of recognition passed between them. The latter, however, was greatly surprised when he heard of Sumpter's having received a commission, and he could not divest his mind of the impression, that he was either directly or indirectly connected with his singular proceedings.

The new lieutenant was the only officer at the post, who had not graduated at the Military Academy. This alone, as is ever the case,created at first feelings of contempt, but when it was known that he was wealthy, had powerful friends, and joined the army out of pure love for adventure, all hostile feeling was suppressed, and his society was even courted by many of his brother officers. The prominent traits of his character, however, soon began to be pretty clearly understood. He had commenced his military career by assuming a braggadocia and blustering air,and although he was totally ignorant of military tactics or discipline, yet he boasted loudly that he could handle a small sword more skillfully, and aim a pistol with greater precision than any man of the garrison. He had much to say to his brother officers of Lieutenant Merrill of the 4th Artillery; threw out many insidious hints regarding his character; and threatening to chastise him, whenever a good opportunity should offer, in retaliation of an alleged insult he had received from him while sojourning at the North. He moreover asserted that he had challenged him to mortal combat, and Merrill having declined, he had the satisfaction of reporting him a poltroon in his own native city; and in proof of which he would summon his negro, Jeff, who made it a point always to coincide with his master, to bear testimony to Merrill's disgrace.

In this manner did Sumpter really gain an ascendancy over many of those who were greatly his superiors ; and they were made fully to believe that he was a second Cardinal de Retz in affairs of honor. They therefore sought not to incur his displeasure, although there was not a man of his rank, who knew him, but held him in utter detestation.

Sumpter, nevertheless, succeeded in impressing upon the minds of his fellow officers a partial contempt for Lieutenant Merrill, though as a disciplinarian all acknowledged his superiority, and they wondered that so able an officer should lack courage. Besides, when these stories, which were rife in the barracks, came to Merrill's ears, he took no pains whatever to refute them, but studiously avoided all conversation upon the subject. He performed his duties as a soldier and a gentleman, thinking this the most effectual mode of maintaining his reputation.

Two or three months after their arrival at Tampa, one or two incidents occured which changed the current of sentiment, touching the prowess of Sumpter and the cowardice of Merrill.

Towards sunset, of a pleasant autumnal day, a group of officers were standing upon a bank overlooking the beautiful bay, enjoying the refreshing and perpetual breezes peculiar to this place, and conversing upon each topic that came uppermost. At the same time a small sloop-rigged boat, containing three individnals, was observed by them coming up the bay under a full press of canvas and with great velocity. As she

neared the quay, she rounded to suddenly, when, at the instant, a flaw of wind struck the sails, and she immediately capsized!

This accident was viewed from the bank by the young officers idly stationed there, but being on the opposite side of the bay, they saw the impossibility of gaining the opposite bank in season to render assistance to those in immediate peril. But such was not the case with a single individual, who chanced at the time to be walking on the beach, within thirty rods of the perilous scene. It was but the work of a moment that he divested himself of his coat, cap and boots, and intrepidly plunging into the turbulent waters, he swam rapidly towards the capsized bark The three unfortunate persons had succeeded in gaining the keel of the boat to which they clung for dear life.

'Can any of you swim?' enquired the intrepid young man, as he reached the sufferers.

'A little!' replied one of them, 'but I am fearful that my strength will not enable me to save my own life. My companions cannot swim at all.'

'Pull for the shore, then,' said he, who had come to the rescue, 'and I will be near you in case that you do not succeed.'

The gallant fellow took by his side one of the boat's company and safely landed him on shore. He immediately returned and succeeded in saving the other, while the third breasted the waves manfully and finally gained the beach.

All these proceedings were plainly observed by the group of officers from the other side, and as they saw that all were saved they gave three hearty cheers for the noble preserver!

'A courageous and gallant fellow, whoever he may be!' remarked Lieutenant Sumpter to his comrades as the echo of their cheers died away.

'Yes; and if my vision does not deceive me, he is the identical person whom you have branded as a coward!' replied one of the number.

'It is Lieut. Merrill of the 4th Artillery!' cried another.

'Impossible! it cannot be!' replied Sumpter. 'A man who has the courage and soul to peril his life in that manner would never decline an honorable challenge!'

'It is him, nevertheless,' said the first speaker, 'and I'm more than half inclined to the belief that Lieut. Merrill deserves not the contemptible impression which is generally held of him throughout the post. His conduct, ever since he joined his regiment at Harper's Ferry, belies the rumors which have been circulated calling in question his courage and character!'

'Are you serious, Lieut. Lee, in what you say?' asked Sumpter, sharply.

'That is my firm belief!' answered Lee, emphatically.

'Which is equal to saying that I have been guilty of many falsehoods?'

'If you please so to construe it!' coolly replied Lee.

'I shall hold you to account for this!'

'I am ever at your service.'

'Come, come, no quarelling!' interposed Surgeon Swasey; 'it's against the positive regulations of the garrison!'

'The fellow has insulted me!' exclaimed Sumpter.

'The villain has belied the character of a faithful and gallant officer!' said Lee, 'and I here stand ready to prove my words.'

'Insolent fellow, draw! I'll prove that your courage is even less than his!' said Sumpter in a blustering rage.

'Hold, gentlemen!' commanded the surgeon; 'if you are determined to fight, do not butcher each other like savages; but let's have the affair come off decently, and in accordance with the honorable code regulating duels.'

'You are right, Doctor,' said Lee; 'I appoint you my second.'

'Lieut. Wilkins, will you do me the honor to act as my second?' asked Sumpter.

'Yes, yes,' replied Wilkins, 'if you are disposed to have fair play I can't object. Come, doctor, let's prepare the ground, and draw lots for positions. You have the choice of weapons. Do not say blunderblusses nor meat-axes, but decent, Christian-like weapons. Let's have every thing done up genteelly.'

'Small swords!' answered the surgeon, after consulting his principal.

The ground was prepared—the positions marked out, and the weapons placed in the hands of the combatants. They took their ground, and for the first time it was observed that Sumpter trembled—his bloodless lips quivered—and his cheeks were pallid with fear.

Not so with his antagonist; not a muscle seemed to move, and he stood firm as a rock for the encounter.

The signal was given to commence the combat, and their swords crossed! A few passes were made by Lee, which were easily parried by Sumpter. This slightly renewed the courage of the latter, and he no longer stood on the defensive, but commenced thrusting vigorously, but each pass was turned aside by the skillful parries of Lee.

The parties for a few moments now disengaged to regain strength for a renewal of the encounter.

Their swords again met—Sumpter fought earnestly and with energy—Lee played coolly and harmlessly, as if he were engaged with a novice. This exasperated Sumpter more and more; and as his anger increased his courage also increased in proportion. In his desperation, and by a severe blow, the blade of his antagonist was broken close to the hilt; and Sumpter, perceiving his foe defenceless, was about to run him through, when in a twinkling his own sword flew from his hand! Like a chafed tiger he run and regained his sword, and was ready to pounce upon him who had dared to interfere at the instant he was to complete his triumph over his unarmed opponent. What was his wrath, upon turning round, at beholding the figure of his hated rival with a naked sword in his hand! Merrill had observed the commencement of the affray, and hurrying towards the spot, he arrived in time to prevent the villain from butchering one of his fellow officers!

'Ah! scoundrel! coward!' exclaimed Sumpter in a rage; 'was it you who thwarted me? How dare you again to cross my path?'

'Mr. Sumpter,' replied Merrill calmly, 'put up your sword. 'With you I seek no quarrel!'

'Consummate villain! you first insult me, and then your dastardly spirit gives me no opportunity to chastise you!'

'I have only prevented you from the commission of a crime which your soul must ever after have shuddered it! Put up your sword! Seek not to murder!'

'Murder?' reiterated Sumpter; 'it is thus you would escape me! A fit subterfuge for a miserable poltroon! You cannot escape me now! This is the moment I have long sought for, and even prayed for!'

Thus speaking, with sword in hand, he rushed furiously upon Merrill, who parried his desperate thrusts and held him at bay, without attempting to assume the offensive. He soon became tired of thus defending himself, and making a dexterous parry, he caused the sword of Sumpter to fly from his hand to the distance of some yards; and as he attempted to regain his weapon, the surgeon interfered, picked it up, and refused to let him have it. This enraged the defeated man beyond measure; he threatened, raged, and stormed, but it was of no avail. All were now determined that he should not again fight.

Thus was this southern braggart most signally defeated by one whom he had endeavored to disgrace by reporting the most foul stories touching his integrity, his honor and his valor. This event stung him to the quick. Casting a hellish look upon Merrill, and exclaiming through his clenched teeth, 'Villain, we shall meet again! My hour of vengeance has not yet come!' he turned upon his heel and with rapid strides pursued his way towards the barracks, muttering by the way curses and oaths of vengeance upon his rival.

At Lee's earnest solicitation it was agreed that the matter of the duel should be hushed up as serious consequences might ensue, should it reach the ears of their superior officers; knowing full well that the defeated and chop-fallen Sumpter would not be likely to proclaim his own disgrace.

Notwithstanding their precaution the affair got wind, and the whole garrison was

in a high state of excitement; the participators were arrested, and the matter underwent an investigation before a military tribunal, the result of which was, all concerned received a severe reprimand from the commanding officer of the division.

This conclusion of the affair was precisely what Sumpter hoped for; and he forthwith indited a letter, which he addressed to a certain notorious New York editor with whom he was acquainted, and gave such a version of the affair as would suit his own purpose, introducing the name of Merrill, whose conduct he condemned, as frequently as possible. Consequently, not many weeks elapsed ere the whole nation was knowing to the particulars of the duel according to Sumpter's version, who took precaution not to allow his signature to be appended to the letter.

The heroic and noble actions of Lieutenant Merrill placed him upon a right footing with his fellow officers. He gained many warm friends, and all highly esteemed him. Not so with his ignoble and contemptible adversary. In proportion as Merrill arose in esteem, he sunk into disrepute, and before many days passed away he had become the jest and by-word of nearly all who knew him.

This state of affairs was well known and keenly felt by Sumpter; and he looked upon Merrill as the sole author of this change of sentiment. In pursuit of revenge was his whole time occupied, and his mind was completely absorbed in concocting projects by which he might disgrace, and cause him to know and suffer the bitterness of his revengeful wrath.

CHAPTER V.

Singular Meeting of Sumpter and Dawson. The latter recounts his Wonderful Adventures. The Conspiracy.

"Now by two-headed Janus
Nature hath framed strange fellows in her time."

JUST as the echoes of the evening gun from the fortress had died away upon the breeze, a few days subsequent to the disgraceful defeat of Sumpter, that worthy past the outer post of the garrison, and continued his way alone along the beach which skirts the beautiful bay of Tampa, the better to meditate upon the one great topic which was uppermost in his mind, and to devise some plan by which he might severely punish him whom he so sincerely hated. He had not walked more than half of a mile when he discovered, reclining by the side of a rock, a soldier in the undress garb of an artilleryman. He was smoking a curiously constructed pipe, of rude material and workmanship, and watching with pleasure the circling flight of innumerable sea-birds which hovered over the waters. He seemed truly happy in his loneliness; his countenance beamed with intelligence and complacency, and his body rested in the most comfortable position possible.

As Sumpter approached him he leisurely turned his head and gave a momentary look, but without offering any sign of recognition or even saluting the officer, as was his duty, he resumed his lazy attitude and continued smoking.

'Sirrah?' ejaculated Sumpter, sharply.

'Eh?' grunted the soldier, still keeping his eye seaward.

'Sirrah! do you hear?'

'Eh?'

'Are you deaf? or do you not know your duty to an officer?'

'I suppose it is customary for soldiers to be civil and obeisant to their superiors, but is it not their duty, in all cases, to set the example!'

'Insolent fellow! know you to whom you speak?'

'I must confess myself slightly in doubt, replied the soldier, sarcastically; 'your voice has not quite the effeminacy of a woman; neither has it the tone which denotes manliness. But since you have put the

question I will give you a candid reply. I judge you to be an overgrown boy who has just escaped from the leading-strings of his dear mama!'

'Your insolence is insufferable!'

'Do not get into a passion, my little fellow; keep cool.'

'Take that for your temerity in insulting an officer!' returned the angry Sumpter, striking the soldier upon the back with his sword-sheath.

In a moment the soldier was upon his feet, and with a ferocious aspect he was about to spring upon the man who had dared to strike him, when he started back in amazement, and eyeing him for a moment, his rage was suddenly quelled, and he burst into a hearty laugh!

'Sumpter! by Jupiter!' exclaimed he, as he recognized him.

'Dawson! by all the gods!' responded Sumpter, and they seized each other by the hands, highly delighted with their unexpected meeting.

'By what great convulsion of nature came you landed here, Dawson. I could'nt have been more surprised if I had encountered his Satanic Majesty, himself!'

'Eh! much obliged to you for the simile,' answered Ned.

'But, seriously, how in the d—l came you here?'

'Destiny—destiny.'

'Fiddlestick! Come, come, no more foolery. What brought you hither?'

'The power of attraction? Like the centre of a system of worlds, should it pass out of its orbit, the lesser bodies would of course follow.'

'And pray what has that to do with your being here?'

'In plainer terms, then, the Sun of my existence, around which I revolved, being erratically disposed, suddenly left the northern hemisphere, and took its place among the brighter constellations of the southern.'

'I do not yet comprehend; you speak in riddles, Ned.'

'Then thou art a dull, stupid ass, as my intimate friend, Bill Shakspeare, would say. Now mark the meaning in terms that cannot fail to penetrate thy thick skull. Thou art the Sun, and your humble servant, Edward Dawson, Esq. high private of the army of the Republic, is the Satellite.'

'Ha, ha! now I fully understand. Your friendship for me has brought you hither?'

'Exactly so!'

'I appreciate the compliment.'

'Glad of it. I wish it could penetrate his purse,' said Dawson to himself.

'You are so disguised I did not at first recognise you,' remarked Sumpter.

'I thought not. Confound it how my back smarts!'

'Forgive me that blow, Ned. I would as quickly have struck my own father as you. On my word I did not know you.'

'I know it, George, I know it. There's my hand—I forgive you, though I would have challenged any other man in Christendom for a far less provocation.'

'Thank you; your magnanimity is only equalled by your friendship.'

'And your many good qualities only exceeded by your generosity,' added Dawson, significantly.

'Come, come, a truce to compliments. But how came you in this toggery? the garb of a common foot soldier?'

'Being unable to serve myself, I concluded to serve my country and enlist as a common savage hunter. My courage will undoubtedly ensure my promotion, and in less than one year I anticipate having the command of a detachment of the Spanish blood-hounds, recently imported from Cuba.'

'You seem in excellent spirits.'

'Spirits? My soul's in arms! as Richard says—my spirit's eager for the fight! Speaking of spirit, George, I usually carry the largest quantity in my canteen,' continued Dawson, producing the aforesaid article, filled with brandy. 'Come, let's take a horn, in memory of other days, as some song writer hath it.'

'Ha! that's pure Otard, fourth proof,' remarked Sumpter, after drinking from his friend's canteen.'

'Nectar, by Jupiter!' said Dawson, smacking his lips after a draught from the vessel.

'How long is't since you enlisted?' asked Sumpter.

'One week ?'

'Impossible! We have had no arrivals recently.'

'Oh yes, one. Myself and two others landed here in a most miraculous manner.'

'What do you mean ?'

'Now don't interrupt me, and I'll render one of my remarkables adventures as clear as daylight,' resumed Dawson. 'In the first place, George, times have sadly changed since I last saw the light of your agreeable countenance. When last we met, as another song-writer hath it, I was surrounded by every luxury that mortal man could desire, including a magnificent hookah, a present from Sultan Mahmoud, and a plentiful supply of opium and tobacco. I was then a happy man———'

'Pshaw!' interrupted Sumpter, impatiently. 'Be more explicit.'

'As I said before,' contiued Dawson, without heeding the interruption, 'I was a happy man, and I had a friend whose generous soul never refused to loan me money. That friend departed—I was sure that the great loss presaged some mighty event in which I was to act a conspicuous part.—My prophetic soul, as Shakspeare hath it, did not deceive me. Oh, horror! I shudder when I call to mind that eventful morning! The sun arose in all his gilded majesty while I was comfortably snoring in my bed, undisturbed by any noise, save the sweet, silvery tones of the breakfast bell! when, anon, I was startled by a loud knocking at my door—I leaped from the bed—my heart sunk within me, for in that knock I felt the awful summons which preceded the fulfilment of my prognostications. I kept silent—another knock, and then—oh Pluto—a crash! followed by the bursting in of the door! and lo, and behold, a couple of men—I did not mistake their profession—boldly entered the room! I tried to conceal myself, for I was *en dishabille*, but it was no use, for the basilisks eyes were fastened upon me. I would have jumped out of the window, but I did not like to expose my person in such a scanty wardrobe. The villains commenced taking account of my furniture, including my foils, masks, boxing-gloves, pipe, tobacco, et cetera; and they would have laid their unceremonious hands upon my wearing apparel, had not I possessed the presence of mind in the meanwhile to encase my walking limbs securely in my best and only pair of unmentionables. Had they succeeded in getting possession of them, in what a horrid plight I should have found myself—I blush to think of it!'

'An awkward predicament truly. But, go on with your narrative.'

'After they had laid violent hands upon all my valuable possessions,' resumed Dawson, 'I demanded of them to produce their authority for their unheard of proceedings, and threatened to prosecute them with burglary and robbery. To my utter astonishment on examining their legal documents, I found that my landladies, laundresses, bootmakers, tailors—Oak-Hall and all—had conspired at one fell stroke to complete my ruin! My professional visitors politely invited me to a change of residence, and I soon found myself the unwilling and sole occupant of a very narrow apartment of a stone building in Leverett street, where I was unmercifully kept without any of the luxuries which make life endurable. At the end of three days I took the poor debtor's oath and found myself a free man—that is, free from prison, free from money, in fact, minus every comfort, excepting a threadbare suit, which clung to me night and day as closely as my own skin. In this truly deplorable condition I shunned my former associates, and shipped on board of a brig, bound to Pensacola, as a fore-mast man. Our voyage was prosperous until we were within a day's sail of port, when, at midnight, a violent tempest blew our vessel upon the Florida reef, where she went to pieces. Myself and two others succeeded in getting the yawl-boat free from the wreck, and in the morning we were free from all danger, the wind having abated and our boat floated safely upon the waters. We hoisted mainsail and jib, and steered towards Tampa Bay, one of our crew, fortunately, having some knowledge of the coast. On the following day, towards sunset, as we were sailing up the Bay, with a delightful breeze, a flaw of

wind struck us as we were rounding to and upset our craft, and we should certainly have been drowned, were it not for the intrepidity of a man, who, at the risk of his own life, swam towards us while we were clinging, almost exhausted, to the keel of the boat, and succeeded in bearing us to the shore! Next day I enlisted in the 4th regiment of U. S. Artillery. This is a faithful account of my last adventure, and I feel amply repaid for all my privations and sufferings, my dear boy, at the pleasure I experience in having found you.'

'This is a strange adventure, truly,' said Sumpter, thoughtfully. 'Are you not aware who saved your lives.'

'No. I was almost senseless at the time, and before I recovered to thank him, he had gone.'

'It was my——'. Sumpter hesitated.

'No, it wasn't you.'

'I am well aware of it, my dear fellow, but I sincerely wish it had been. But no matter, I am glad that I have found you.'

'Thank you. By the way, I think I am in your books for a small amount.'

'Don't mind that, Ned—a mere trifle—not worth mentioning.'

'Ah, George, you have the same generous soul that always characterized you; have you got such a thing as ninepence about your clothes, as Mr. Diddler would say? Pay-day don't come every day you know.'

'Certainly, my friend, there's a hafl—Don't hesitate to apply to me when you're short of funds?'

'Thank you, George, I shall always remember; and now that we are going to fight the aboriginals, I'll make my will entirely in your favor, and add my blessing besides.'

'You're very kind. Did you say that you belonged to the 4th Artillery?'

'Ay, the 'bloody fourth,' Colonel C——.'

'To what company are you attached?'

'Company D. By the way the same that your old friend—the Cadet—you know whom I mean—is attached. He doesn't know me, for he gave me a lesson in the manual this morning. He's a rare bird!'

'But I'll pluck his gay plumage for him.'

'What? not another duel, George, hey?'

'Any thing, it matters not what; I am resolved that he shall not much longer triumph over me as he has done!'

'Good pluck—I admire your spirit and perseverance—I would never allow myself to be trampled upon.'

'I'll pursue him to the last. If I fail an hundred times, I will not cease till my triumph is complete.'

'Call him out, George.'

'Nay, I will not condescend thus to notice him. I'll have my revenge in a surer and more effectual manner.'

'What is your plan?'

'I have many in view, but nothing that looks feasible. If I had your assistance we might hit upon a scheme that would accomplish the business.'

'Nothing easier,' replied Dawson, looking significantly at the five dime piece which he held in his hand.

'You'll aid me then?'

'To be sure I will—stop, I'm a little fast—what is the penalty for conspiring against an officer?'

'Pshaw! I don't intend to murder him.'

'Then it's not a——' said Dawson, bending his head on one side, and significantly twitching upward the ends of his cravat.

'Nothing of the kind, I assure you. It would not answer my purpose. I wish to disgrace him for two weighty reasons. When accomplished I have nothing farther to do with him.'

'What are these weighty reasons you speak of?' asked Dawson.

'I'll tell you, in confidence.'

'Oh, certainly, you can ever rely upon your friend.'

'In the first place, Ned, I hate him for several insults which I have borne from him; for these I have sworn vengeance! Secondly, I wish to marry the most beautiful creature that I ever beheld! I have her father's written consent; but by some singular infatuation she has become enamored with this villain, Merrill, and unless I can disgrace him in some way or other she will cling to him to the last.'

'Ah! I now comprehend you fully. By Jupiter, I'll assist you!'

'Will you? then there's my hand and here's my purse.'

'In this great emergency I decidedly prefer the latter,' said Dawson laughing and taking the purse.'

'This is but an earnest of what I intend if our projects are successful.'

'Ah! this comes opportunely—I'm your friend forever—I'll wade through fire and water—expose myself to thunder and lightning, gunpowder and bullets, to serve you.'

'I doubt it not,' replied Sumpter. 'Come, let's walk on the beach—I have a plan partially concocted, which we will talk over in the meantime.

'I'm sorry I have not a pipe to offer you; this I made myself, and the only one I am the owner of. I hope you'll excuse it.'

'Certainly, I never smoke a pipe.'

The officer and soldier strolled arm in arm along the beach, conversing upon the matter which so much interested the former, the result of which we shall give in a future chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

Battle of the Ouithlacoochee. Dangerous position of the Americans. Valiant conduct of Lieut. Merrill. A hair-breadth Escape.

"The yell of the savage arose on high,
The rifle was raised to his eagle eye—
The death-shot was given—again a yell
Told alas! too true, how the hero fell!

CONTRARY to expectation, on the morning following Sumpter's interview with Dawson, a courier arrived from General Gaines, with orders for the troops, concentrated at the garrison of Tampa Bay, to march forthwith towards a point on the Ouithlacoochee River, in the immediate vicinity of which it was known that a large force of Indians were concealed.

For a few hours all was bustle and confusion in and about the barracks of Tampa, and before sunset on the same day the troops took their departure, leaving but a small detachment behind to guard the fortress. The march was a fatiguing one, and during the route several unimportant skirmishes were had with the Indians. They indicated, however, together with the exceeding temerity of the savages, that a large number were not distant. In this they were not disappointed, for early one morning, ere the reveille had alarmed the encampment, they were attacked by a considerable force of their savage foe, who had under cover of the night been enabled to surround the small plain on which they were encamped. But the Indians had not reckoned upon the unusual cautiousness of those with whom they were about to cope, for scarcely a moment had elapsed before every man, armed and equipped, stood forth for battle.

The Indians had, in this instance, approached too near to retreat without great loss, they therefore stood their ground and a general battle ensued. The contest was a severe one, both sides having suffered considerably, and for a long time it was extremely doubtful in whose favor the conflict would terminate. At length one of the companies of Infantry, which had lost three of its superior officers, and holding a position which prevented the savages from gaining possession of a dense hammock, broke way and made a sudden retreat. The Indians, with a victorious yell, rushed into the desired strong-hold and commenced pour-

ing a destructive fire upon the main body, which caused a retreat towards the opposite side of the plain. General T——, who had command of the troops in this engagement, stormed and raved most furiously when he saw one of the most important posts unnecessarily abandoned and the whole corps fly with terror.

At this critical juncture, and as the General rode along the line, he was accosted by a young officer of the 4th Artillery:

'General T——,' said he, saluting his commander, 'the day is lost unless the Indians can be dislodged from the hammock. There is a slight eminence, directly on their right, which if gained with a piece of artillery, would command their strong-hold and force them to retreat.'

'Well suggested, lieutenant,' replied the General; 'where is your captain?'

'Wounded, sir, and taken to the rear.'

'Where is your first lieutenant?'

'Alas, sir, he was killed in the early part of the action.'

'Then you now have the command?'

'I have sir; and with your permission I will make an effort to take possession of the vantage-ground.'

'It is a dangerous position, lieutenant, when gained, and still more so to sustain it. Many must fall ere it can be accomplished; and I dare not so recklessly expose the lives of our troops.'

'It is our only salvation,' urged the young and daring officer.

'I grant it, but I deem it a rash undertaking. I fear your temerity may prove your death. It will require a brave heart and nerves of steel to make the hazardous attempt.'

'Fear not, general; our victory depends upon its success. The enemy must be dislodged or our defeat is certain.'

'Be resolute but cautious,' my brave fellow. I will order a detachment to cover your advance, still you will be exposed to a fearful danger.'

With these words the General give his horse rein and galloped towards the main body of troops, who were now exceedingly annnoyed by the constant fire of the unerring rifles of the Seminoles from the hammock of which they had so recently gained possession.'

Lieutenant Merrill, for it was he who had broached this heroic enterprise to his commanding officer, now prepared to advance with a detachment of only twenty men, with one piece of cannon, towards the point to be gained.

'Forward! be firm!' he exclaimed to his men in a voice that told of an undaunted spirit; and the little detachment pressed forward animated by the zeal and courage manifested by their leader.

This extraordinary movement was noticed throughout the line with astonishment, and all considered it a reckless adventure. Not so with our hero who was executing his bold manœuvre. He had well counted the cost; he knew that by sacrificing a few, perchance himself among the number, the whole army would be saved from a greater loss and certain inglorious defeat; and even if he failed in gaining the commanding position, he could do much towards checking the deadly fire of the enemy upon the main body. The General, in obedience to his promise, detached a company to press forward towards the hammock in another direction, in order, if possible, to divert the attention of the savages from our hero and his command; but this manœuvre was not successful, for they retreated after the first fire. Still Merrill pressed onward, and amid a shower of bullets, and a whoop from the foe, the cannon was planted upon the eminence in a position that must rake the hammock, and soon render it untenable. Before the piece was brought to bear, a large number of the foe suddenly made their appearance and poured a volley of musketry upon the undaunted little band. Two men fell and several were slightly wounded, but the remainder stood firm, ready for the word to commence the action. The piece was depressed, and the match applied, and ere its roar was silenced, a hideous yell from the hammock told the deadly havock it had made. While the troops were reloading the savages again appeared, though not so numerous as before, and again fired, but the smoke not having cleared away, they aimed at random and without any of their

shot taking effect. The firing now became general, and at every discharge of the cannon the same hideous yell was heard, and at each re-appearance of the savages their numbers seemed lessened, but the little band of Merrill had diminished nearly one half, barely a sufficient number to work the piece. Still the remainder maintained their dangerous position; they saw the dreadful slaughter they had made among the enemy, and they resolved to die like men or silence the firing from the Indian only strong-hold. One of the gunners having been disabled, Merrill seized the rammer, and the same part which the great Napoleon enacted at the siege of Toulon, Merrill enacted in this severe conflict; and while he was in the act of ramming the charge a ball struck him and he fell to the ground, but his great point was gained—the enemy deserted the hammock and were now dispersing through the almost impenetrable swamps. Merrill was lifted from the earth and borne to the rear—all thought him dead, but on examination it was found that he had only received a severe shock, and that his life was almost miraculously preserved by a small golden casket, which was appended to a chain that hung around his neck, and which had resisted the ball and prevented it from penetrating directly thro' his heart! yet its force was sufficient to deprive him of breath for many moments! By judicious treatment he quickly recovered, and resumed his duties.

Standing around him were the chief officers of the army, for the battle was over, and the victory, through his intrepidity and sound judgment, was gained. For his singular display of courage they all applauded him, and for his narrow escape from death he received their heartfelt congratulations. It was a desperate and hazardous movement, but the young officer's superiors fully appreciated the immense advantage that had been gained by it, and they all conceded that among all the officers of the division there was not one who would have thought such a bold experiment practical, or who had sufficient prowess to carry it into execution. And yet this was the man they had heard stigmatized as a poltroon, because he had once refused to engage in a duel! But where was the slanderer? Where was the 'citizen' lieutenant, Sumpter? He who had made a cowardly retreat at the commencement of the conflict? Whenever his name was mentioned afterward in the camp the term 'coward' usually accompanied it.

The battle being over, and the rattle of musketry and the roar of cannon having ceased, Sumpter ventured towards the camp, and was greeted by the scorn and contempt of all whom he chanced to meet. He also received a severe reprimand from his general, and would have been sent to the guard-house, had he not been the son of a powerful official in the war department at Washington.

With a sullen and indifferent bearing he bore the contumely that was heaped upon him, and strutted about the camp as if he were the hero of the fight. He affected the same aristocratic bearing which had always characterized him, and declared that his conduct in retreating from the position in which he was placed defied impeachment, the opinion of the General and all his subordinates to the contrary notwithstanding. Yet he was alone in his assumption, and he found none that agreed with him, unless we except private Dawson, who did so contrary to his judgment, for he had long since understood the imbecile character of his monied friend, whom he denominated, among his comrades, his 'banker.' On the evening after the battle, this worthy had another interview with his 'gilded luminary.'

In the despatches of General ———, to the Adjutant General at the Capitol, were the following paragraphs which were annexed to a detailed account of their first general engagement with the Indians, near the Ouithlacoochee:—

"Among the heroic deeds and most remarkable events of this severe conflict, we cannot forber to make mention of the valiant conduct of Lieutenant Merrill, of the 4th Artillery, to whom all consideration and praise is due, for conceiving and carrying into execution, successfully, an enterprise

which for discernment and prowess, has within my experience, rarely been excelled. A numerous body of Indians, who had taken possession of a hammock, impenetrable to our troops, annoyed our whole line exceedingly with their constant discharge of rifles, and our united efforts to rout them proved unsuccessful. At this critical juncture, Lieutenant Merrill, with a small detachment, succeeded in planting a piece of cannon on a slight eminence within twenty rods of them, and from this position he completely routed them. Our situation was extremely embarrassing previous to this successful act of heroism. To Merrill, therefore, and his little detachment, we mainly owe the victory which we finally achieved.

"I am sorry also to make unfavorable mention of Lieut. Sumpter, who, with his detachment abandoned an advantageous position and ingloriously fled from the conflict."

The effect of the above transcript from the missive of the General will be made known to the reader in a future chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

General Gaines arrives at the Camp. The Plot Matured. Conflict with a Seminole Squaw. Timely Arrival of Dawson.

" The sheep for fodder follow the shepherd ; the shepherd for food follows not the sheep ; thou for wages followest thy master ; thy master for money followest not thee ; therefore thou art a sheep."

FOR several weeks after the battle the troops remained inactive in their encampment upon the Ouithlacoochee.—— During this interval one or two incidents transpired, touching our story, which are all important for the full development of our plot.

In order to feel secure against any sudden onslaught of their alert enemy, the number of sentinels were doubled each night, and instead of one commissioned officer two were detailed for night duty. This plan was kept up vigilantly for several weeks. In the meantime General Gaines having arrived at the camp, made it a nightly practice, *in cog.* to visit the several outposts in order to discover if any of the sentinels were remiss in their duty.

This practice of the General was known to Sumpter, and he resolved to turn it to account. He therefore indited the following note to him:

"MAJ. GEN. GAINES,

Dear Sir—Unwilling openly to complain of a brother officer, and deeming it my duty to communicate a fact which is not generally known, I take this method of informing you that a certain individual, whenever detailed for guard duty, and whom I believe serves to night, is invariably addicted to sleeping at his post. And I doubt not, that by visiting the officers' guard tent to-night, you can have the additional evidence of your own senses in corroboration of what I have herein stated. Yours, truly,

VIGILANCE.

The General, on the reception of this information, was greatly surprised and resolved to discover the individual who dare sleep when he should be watchful and vigilant at his post.

'Is it possible!' exclaimed the veteran commander; 'an officer of the Guard in the constant habit of sleeping at his post? Such conduct deserves severe punishment, and if found true he shall be cashiered! Zounds! I'll make an example of him!—

But first I must ascertain the truth or falsity of this note. If I find him guilty woe be to him!'

* * * * * *

We last left Lieutenant Sumpter and his quondam friend, private Dawson, plotting against our much esteemed hero. Since the battle, and previous to the day Sumpter had written to the General, they had had another interview, the important portion of which we will endeavor to make known to the reader in their own language.

'He's too many guns for you, Sumpter,' said Dawson, blowing off a whiff of smoke and again replacing the everlasting pipe in his mouth, and I advise you, at least for the present, to give up the chase.'

'Never will I cease in pursuing my vengeance until my objects are accomplished, or my heart ceases to beat.'

'But he's too much of a favorite just now —why he's the Napoleon of the camp since the battle; and your conduct, you know, on that occasion was not precisely in accordance———'

'Pshaw! pooh!' interrupted Sumpter, 'what care I for what they say? I am not so verdant as to allow my body to become a mark for the savage devils to shoot at.'

'I hold to that doctrine myself, although I flatter myself that I was a small specimen of a hero myself on the day of our glorious victory!'

'I doubt not that you are more valiant than this accidental hero. The truth is, Dawson, it is not for want of courage that I object to exposing myself, but I freely confess that I have not the slightest ambition for military glory; and joined the army mainly for the purpose of seeking a quarrel and chastising this Merrill, who dares not stand up coolly and face me with pistols in hand.'

'I have heard that the fellow shew good pluck when he interfered between you and Lee?'

'None at all! He knew I was rather an ordinary swordsman; besides he came upon me when I was engaged steel to steel with another. That makes a difference you know, Dawson; d'ye see?'

'Oh, yes—I see it all,' replied the soldier with an air of indifference.

'I have an idea!' resumed Sumpter at length.

'Hold on to it or pass it to me before you lose it!'

'Will you stand by me through thick and thin, Dawson?'

'On my honor.'

'Enough! Merrill is the first officer of the guard to-morrow night!'

'True, and I'm high private of that vigilant body!'

'Better yet; you can do wonders for me.'

'I am happy to hear it; but that depends upon circumstances. I shall require the aid of funds to carry on the war successfully.'

'I do not comprehend your meaning.

'I'm short of ammunition; I havn't a shot in the locker, nor so much as a plug of tobacco in my knapsack.'

'Oh, ho! I understand! There's a few 'mint-drops' as a fore-runner of something better!' said Sumpter, handing Dawson several half-eagles.'

'George, I'm forever your debtor! command me!'

'In this paper, Ned, is an opiate—not enough to harm a child, but sufficient to make a grown person sleep comfortably and soundly.'

'You surely cannot mean to have me take an opiate? I shall fall asleep at my post—the old 'cocked-hat' will be on his 'rounds,' and to-morrow morning I shall find myself in the guard-house there to await certain penalties———'

'No, no, Ned,' interrupted Sumpter, 'you do not comprehend me. 'That is precisely the situation in which I wish to place our enemy.'

The d—l!' exclaimed Dawson. 'It will break his commission!'

'Precisely the result I anticipate. Then the purpose for which I have entered the army will be accomplished. Merrill will be in disgrace, and will probably go hang, shoot or drown himself! So much the better. I shall throw up my commission and

return in triumph, on the wings of love, to the tri-mountain city.'

'And what is to become of your faithful friend ?' asked Dawson, sorrowfully.

'I'll procure your discharge, and you shall accompany me.'

'Good! glorious! it will be joy ineffable to emigrate from this mosquitoe country. I had rather fight an army of Seminoles than fight a myriad of mosquitoes. All night I am obliged to defend myself against their attacks. Squadrons of these flying artillerists wheel themselves into line, and come boldly to the attack with the sounds of clarions, braying of horns and clashing of armor! They pierce me with their keenly sharpened lances on every side, and though I slay a host with each stroke of my mighty arm, as many more of the reserved corps come to the rescue; and if I put *hors du combat* a legion, they will quickly rally and come more boldly than ever to the attack! Poor Gulliver, when assaulted by the entire forces of Lilliputans combined, was not half so closely harrassed as I am by the Flying Artillery of Florida, armed to the teeth, and clad in suits of mail ! I deem myself a greater than Napoleon, a Hannibal or an Alexander, for they counted their slain by hundreds of thousands, I reckon mine by millions !'

'Well, well, we did not come here to talk over your valiant deeds,' interrupted Sumpter, impatiently. 'Our business is of another character altogether.'

'True—speaking of the opiate, how is the thing to be managed ? I fear it will be difficult.'

'Nothing more easy, I assure you. The officers of the guard have a collation every night at nine o'clock! Contrive to make an errand to their tent a few minutes before that time while they are marching the 'grand rounds.' Their servant will not suspect you. When his back is turned slip the drug slily into Merrill's coffee! D'ye understand ?'

'Perfectly! Capital! I'll do it! And what then ?'

'Why simply that the unsuspecting lieutenant will find himself deuced sleepy, and all effort to keep awake will prove ineffectual. Thus absolutely compelled to take a nocturnal siesta, my plan must succeed.—General Gaines will be on the alert as usual—surprise him in this highly interesting condition—cause him to be arrested, sent to the guard-house, tried before a drum-head court-martial, found guilty, and sentenced to be expelled from the army !'

'What then ?'

'Why, then—I trust he'll commit suicide at once !'

'Is that the *finale* of the whole affair ?' asked Dawson.

'An end of him at all events.'

'But what will be my fate ? It's a high offence !'

'My dear fellow, I'll accept your drafts for a year to come.'

'Conscience avaunt! as Gloster says. Down, busy devil, down—I'll do it! What an excellent soother of the conscience money is to a poor man! I'll do anything for money but murder and steal ! I could never screw my courage to the *sticking* point as Mrs. Macbeth caused her husband to do !—And as for stealing—I never could steal even when I was penniless—it's mean, low, contemptible! And I believe I should decline now, were it not that my pockets were rescued from their poverty-stricken condition by these yellow-boys.'

'You will not relent ?'

'No, by Jupiter! You have my word! I always keep that sacred! I never lie! Lying is akin to stealing !'

'And my promises shall be as faithfully performed as yours !'

'Enough !'

'Let us now separate—we must not be observed confering together.'

'No ; it becomes not an officer to hold secret converse with a private—it looks suspicious you know—besides, it compromises the dignity of that amiable and highly polished class of gentlemen to which you belong,' replied Dawson, in a tone of pleasant irony.

'Never mind, Ned—if our plans do not fail we shall become equals again—I'll resign my worthless commission, and you shall become a true gentleman in appearance as you have ever been in soul.

'Deuce take your compliments—give us money! money!' repeated Dawson.

'Fear not; you shall be well supplied; meet me here at the setting of the sun to-morrow night.'

'As you command, so shall I obey.'

The interview being ended the officer and private separated, and taking different directions through the wood, in order to avoid being seen together, they soon lost sight of each other.

Dawson had not proceeded more than a hundred rods, when he heard the loud cries of some one apparently in distress. Hastening in the direction from whence the cries proceeded, he was surprised as well amused to witness a conflict between Sumpter and an old Seminole squaw, who had suddenly pounced upon him from a thick jungle where she had been concealed. The strife had evidently been a severe one, but the old squaw had finally gained the advantage, and was in the act of securing the officer's hands behind him, when Dawson appeared. He looked on for a few moments, unobserved by the combatants, to witness the sport; and then rushing up behind the squaw, he seized her and threw her upon the ground. He then loosened the cords which bound Sumpter. The latter, enraged to desperation, drew his sword and would have killed her upon the spot had not Dawson interfered.

'You would not murder this old woman, Sumpter?'

'She would have burned me alive!'

'Never mind, that,' answered Dawson; 'then I have saved you from a horrible death, and I ask this woman's life as a recompense.'

'Let her go, then.'

The squaw was freed and she was soon lost to view in the dense wood.

'Say nothing of this adventure, Dawson, I beg of you,' said Sumpter.

'I'm mum,' answered the soldier.

The sun had sunk beneath the horizon, ere the subaltern or private passed the outposts of the encampment.

CHAPTER VIII.

Success of Sumpter's hellish Scheme. Merrill under Guard. The Trial. The Result.

"Oh my reputation, I have lost my reputation."

BRIGHT and full the moon arose, and shed her silvery radiance over the white tents of the troops encamped near the margin of the swiftly flowing and sparkling waters of the Ouithlacoochee. The brilliant constellations of the southern arch gave welcome light to the sentinels who paced to and fro about the tented field. It was the night on which Lieutenants Lee and Merrill had charge of the guard of the encampment, and they were now finishing their midnight repast, when the cry of 'Twelve o'clock and all's well!' from one of the sentinels reminded them of their duty. Lee jumped up, buckled on his sword, summoned the relief guard, and commenced his 'grand rounds.' Soon after he had left the tent, Merrill arose and walked back and forth in order to shake off a strange and heavy drowsiness which was imperceptibly stealing over him. At length he sat down, and not many moments elapsed ere he fell into a deep sleep!

Presently the slow and measured tread of a tall and dignified figure, with a cloak thrown loosely over his shoulders, accompanied by two aides-de-camp were seen to approach the quarters of the officers of the night. For a moment they halted before the tent, as if expecting to be challenged for the watch-word, but no one appearing, and all being still as death, save the distant and occasional challenging of the grand rounds by the sentinels, one of the aids raised the canvas of the entrance, which he suddenly let fall, and turning round to his commander, exclaimed in a whispering tone in his ear:

'The officer of the guard is asleep!'

'Then I have not been imposed upon,' replied General Gaines. 'This man is constantly in the habit of sleeping while on duty.'

'Can it be possible?' ejaculated the other attendant. 'Why, it must be Lieutenant Merrill.'

'Indeed!' replied Gaines. 'I am sorry

for him. Let us all be satisfied as to this gross violation of duty, that our testimony may be positive.'

The canvas was again raised and the three individuals entered the tent, where they gazed for some moments upon the sleeping officer.

'Mr. Tompkins,' at length said the general to one of his aids; 'repair to the guard house with a minute's delay and bring hither a file of men.'

The aid touched his cap and departed.

'Officer of the Guard!' shouted the General, endeavoring to awaken the sleeping lieutenant.

No answer was given.

'Officer of the guard!' again shouted he with increased emphasis.

Still no answer.

'He sleeps soundly. Such a man would sleep amid the din of battle. A few such officers would complete the ruin of our army,' remarked the General, at the same time shaking the sleeper violently.

The unconscious man partially awoke—he wildly and startlingly exclaimed:

'Who goes there?'

The General threw off his cloak and displayed his commanding figure clad in full uniform.

Merrill's eyes glared confusedly for a moment at his commander—he jumped to his feet and in an attitude of affright and dismay, exclaimed:

'Merciful Heaven!—General Gaines?—I am undone!' and he sunk back upon the seat and hid his face in his hands.

'Mr. Merrill, I must confess my surprise and amazement at this conduct in you,' said the veteran General in a stern manner.—'I have heard much of your valour in the field, and your reputation is unexcelled by that of any subaltern in the army. Asleep?—at midnight—and in the enemies' country—surrounded by a sanguinary foe? It is monstrous! The senior officer of the night, too? Why such conduct is unheard of! and however much it grieves me my duty must be performed—I must order your immediate arrest.'

The file of soldiers for which the aid was despatched had now arrived.

'Mr. Merrill, you are now a prisoner!—Guard conduct the lieutenant to the guard-house!'

Without giving utterance to a single syllable, Merrill arose and was prepared to follow.

'Your sword, lieutenant!' said the General.

Merrill drew the weapon from its scabbard, and presenting it to his commander, said in tones of bitter anguish:

'General, I feel myself unworthy to serve under you! Take the weapon—it becomes me not! I deserve punishment—I expect it—and I pray that death may be the penalty! Oh God! what have I done? Forfeited my honor—my reputation—all is lost—irretrievably lost—disgraced—forever disgraced!'

Here he paused—and at the moment his guard companion, Lieutenant Lee entered the tent, and upon seeing Merrill under arrest, he started back as if he too were to suffer the same fate.

'Fear not, Mr. Lee,' said General Gaines, 'I find you attending to your duty.'

'May I venture to enquire the cause of my friend's arrest?' asked Lee.

'I discovered him sleeping soundly when I came to the tent!'

'Can it be possible! I left him not twenty minutes since—he was then awake—he must have fallen asleep suddenly.'

'I witnessed sufficient to warrant any officer's expulsion from the service,' replied the stern disciplinarian. 'And I have been informed that it is his usual practice to sleep at his post.'

'Indeed! this is the first that I ever knew of it, and we have been the companions of many a night-watch!' answered Lee.

'Believe me, my friend,' said Merrill, this is the first and only act of the kind that I am guilty of.'

'Once is quite sufficient,' said Gaines.

'I am well aware of it, General, and I trust that all due leniency and consideration be granted him. I am proud—shall ever be proud to rank him as a faithful friend, notwithstanding his unaccountable conduct. Before I entered the army I knew him not; our friendship commenced with this expedition. I have witnessed his heroism in the field; and I have ever considered him unusually strict in performing every duty required of those of his grade in the service. He is kind, generous and magnanimous to all, even to those who have endeavored by slander to detract from his true merits. Take him all in all he has not a superior in the army.'

'All this may be very true, Mr. Lee,' replied General Gaines; but this gross act of insubordination in times like these—in the very heart of the enemy's country, where we are every moment liable to be attacked by savage fiends, deserves the severest rebuke.'

'True, General, but I am fully persuaded that my friend has not fallen asleep while in firm health—some unusual physical infirmity has caused this.'

'I hope your opinion will be substantiated upon the day of trial. Good night, gentlemen, I shall order an officer to supply the prisoner's place for the night.' Thus saying the commanding officer, accompanied by his aids, left the tent, and after patrolling around the outposts they entered the marquee of the encampment.

'My dear friend,' said Merrill to Lee, on the General's departure, 'I thank you for the kind words you have spoken, but you have flattered me far beyond my just deserts. As soon as you left me a sudden lethargy benumbed my senses, and enervated my limbs to such a degree, I fell upon the ground senseless; and I did not awake until aroused by the General and his staff officers.'

'I am sure that it was something unusual, for you could not close your eyes, while in your sober senses, in these critical times; and I doubt not that at your trial a plea of this kind will ensure your acquittal.'

'I feel that it would prove of no avail,' replied Merrill. Farewell, my friend! the guard awaits! I must to a prison!'

The two lieutenants warmly embraced—tears moistened the eyes of both—they parted, and Merrill was conducted to the guard house where a sentinel was placed over him.

Not having fully recovered from his morbid feelings, he again sunk into a deep sleep, from which he did not awake until the morning was far advanced. But he arose refreshed; the lethargy which he conceived had caused his disgrace had entirely left him. He looked forth from his prison, and thus soliloquised:

'Oh God, what a change has the lapse of a few hours wrought in me! Yesterday, I was happy! I felt myself esteemed by my comrades, and my reputation as a soldier established! I heard not the opprobrious epithets which were applied to me, previous to our engagement. No, I heard nought but flattering encomiums. I felt pleased, I must confess; for it pointed me to that bright celestial star, whose gentle rays guide my every action! For thee, beloved, I have attempted the rugged ascent to the pinnacle of fame! I exposed my life to gain the first step! and thy guardian spirit preserved me from peril! Yes, sweet Effie,' continued he, taking from his bosom the golden casket which had preserved his life and opening it; 'yes, beloved of my soul, it was thy spirit, not thy counterfeit herein encased, that stood as a sentinel guarding the fountain of life while on the bloody field of battle. Alas! how changed! my bright hopes have vanished, and desolation and gloom hovers about me! I am no longer worthy thy love, for a dark stain defaces my hitherto unblemished escutcheon—and should I be acquitted for my first act of insubordination, the stain will still be there, for the heavy charge against me admits of no denial! So long as one shadow of it remains, the love which I bear thee is not worthy thy smallest consideration. And yet a smile still lingers upon those sweet lips and love yet beams from those resplendent orbs! Oh Heaven! would it were true that her spirit animated this 'counterfeit

presentiment' of herself, then might I believe that she would ever look kindly on me!'

His reflections were interrupted by the approach of an officer, who came near the aperture from whence the prisoner was looking. He stopped and gazed upon him for a moment, and Merrill saw upon that countenance the same hellish smile with which he had been greeted once or twice before! It was his rival—his evil genius—Sumpter, who had come to triumph over his victim.

'Ha, ha! I said that we should meet again,' remarked Sumpter, with an air of satisfaction.

'Do you pursue me even to a prison?' asked Merrill.

'Ay, to thy grave! unless the reparation I demand be fully made!'

'Go your way; I have nothing to do with thee!'

'But I have with thee my gallant hero!' returned Sumpter, tauntingly. 'The day is fine, and a walk among these fine groves would invigorate you, and we could adjust our little matters without interruption. Oh, excuse me, I had forgotten your interesting condition—my fine bird is caged at last.'

'Begone, impertinent puppy,' said Merrill.

'Drive me not away, because I have come to do you an act of kindness.'

'Such acts are foreign to a spirit like thine—they would ill become thee!' returned Merrill, indignantly.

'I can at least give information regarding your fate.'

'I had rather await the result of my trial than to hear it from thy lips, were it possible for thee to know.'

'Nevertheless, I'll tell you; your trial comes on to-morrow—you will be found guilty—perhaps shot! for that is the penalty! at least, cashiered! and those gay trappings which you wear so proudly will be stripped from you. Your disgrace will be trumpeted throughout the land—it will reach the ears of one who is the idol of your soul!—and who will ever scorn your name afterward! She is mine—ha, ha! Shallow-pated fool—to think that you could circumvent and thwart my plans always. I have you on the hip now, and if you'll give me your address six months hence I'll send you an account of my marriage with the rich, accomplished and beautiful Effie Stanwood!'

'She would never consent to marry a wretch like thee!'

'I need not her consent,' resumed Sumpter. 'I have her father's written obligation that his daughter shall be mine! And so my caged pigeon I wish you all joy in anticipation of the pleasant prospect before you!'

With these words Sumpter turned upon his heel and walked away.

'Imbecile wretch!' exclaimed Sumpter; 'that man has not one spark of human feeling within him; he would sell his own soul to gain a temporary triumph over his enemy, however ignoble the means might be to accomplish it.'

On the following day Merrill, under guard, was brought before the Military tribunal convened for the purpose of investigating the alleged offence and pronouncing judgment upon him. The veteran commander presided—his aids-de camp were the chief witnesses, and upon being called to the stand, testified positively against the prisoner! Merrill produced no rebutting testimony; he did not attempt to explain or palliate the severe charge; but when called upon to speak in his own behalf, he confessed that every word of the evidence against him was true! All the subordinate officers were present, and there was but one among them all who did not look with an eye of sympathy, and silently prayed for his acquittal! This exception was Sumpter, who sat directly opposite his victim, and with the eyes of a basilisk he watched his every movement, and when he confessed his guilt, he inwardly chuckled, and a gleam of satisfaction pervaded his corrupt heart. General Gaines was affected by the general sentiment that prevailed, but it did not bias his judgment, nor did it swerve him one iota from his duty. He gave his opinion upon the merits of the case without the slightest prejudice, but he dwelt with severity upon the great breach of dis-

cipline that had been committed, and warned all against a like offence. He adjourned the court-martial until the succeeding day, during which time the officers of the court conferred together, and passed upon the sentence which was to be proclaimed at the adjourned session.

Officers and soldiers were allowed to be present on this occasion, and long ere the time had arrived, the whole area in front of the marquee was thronged with interested spectators.

At length the court was called to order, and the prisoner stood before the tribunal awaiting his sentence. Not a limb trembled, not a muscle moved—erect and dignified, with his large eyes fixed upon the judges, he stood like one more ready to receive honor rather than the deserts of an offender.

The president of the court-martial arose to pronounce the results of their mature deliberations. He read the article of war which declares that any officer found guilty sleeping at his post, in time of war, shall suffer death by being shot, or such other punishment as a court-martial may deem proper after a candid and impartial investigation of the facts. He alluded to the guilt of the prisoner, and he regretted sincerely that there was not a single palliating circumstance in the case before the court.—On the other hand it was aggravated in his own mind by indirect information which he had received, that the prisoner had been for some time in the habit of sleeping at his post. He gave credence to this information, for it was the means by which the prisoner had finally been detected, but he solemnly affirmed that he did not allow it to bias his judgment.

Upon hearing this, Merrill started back in surprise! A new impulse now moved him! A gleam of suspicion for the first time thwarted across his mind! He turned his head and for several moments fastened his gaze upon Sumpter. The latter quailed at the penetrating look, and dropped his head upon his breast to hide the confusion manifest therein. Merrill interrupted the president by exclaiming,

'I am not guilty! I have been the victim of an unmerciful wretch! By some damnable villainy have I been made to commit this act of insubordination!'

'Silence!' returned the president; 'interrupt not the court, unless you can produce some positive evidence to show why the sentence should not be pronounced.'

Merrill was silent, and bent his eye to the ground.

The president resumed his remarks, and addressed him with feeling and eloquence, and finally concluded by proclaiming the sentence of the court, which was death! a soldier's death!—to be shot!

When the sentence was read there was a murmur of surprise manifested by all present, unless we except the prisoner. He had anticipated the worst—he had wished it, and he heard the fatal words without betraying a single emotion, and he walked back to his prison with a firm step and a dignified carriage.

'Welcome death!' soliloquised he, after he had entered his place of confinement.—'I can die bravely—but I could not suffer any other punishment with a stout heart—to be disgraced and bear the scorn and opprobrium of the world, I could not endure! But to die is peace—immortal, everlasting peace!'

With these words he threw himself upon a rude couch, where we shall, for the present, leave him.

A detailed account of the court-martial was immediately forwarded to Washington, and the execution delayed, until a higher authority could be consulted, for it was hoped and believed that the condemned would be pardoned, or at least that the sentence would be commuted. This, however, was not known to any but the officers composing the court-martial, for it was their policy to impress upon the minds of all the danger of insubordination, and to this alone may be attributed the severity of the sentence.

On the day after the trial, Lieutenant Sumpter, on the plea of ill health, surrendered his commission and immediately departed for the north, without even seeking another interview with his reckless accomplice, Ned Dawson. The latter, however,

received a letter from him a few days afterwards, dated at New Orleans, enclosing a hundred dollar note, with assurances that on his arrival at Washington, he would procure his discharge and make him another remittance of money.

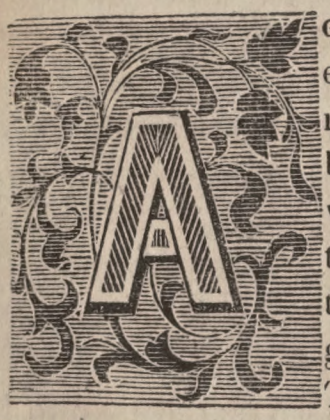
Dawson was completely astounded upon hearing the decision of the court-martial; he had not for a moment supposed that the punishment could have exceeded a suspension from rank. Now that his monied friend had gone, he had an opportunity to reflect upon his conduct, and he regretted having committed the act, for which one of his fellow beings was under sentence of death. He also reviewed the conduct of Sumpter, and came to the conclusion that he was a villain of the deepest dye; and he resolved that, rather than have Merrill suffer any severe punishment he would himself disclose his own and Sumpter's villainy in carrying this matter so far. But he entertained the opinion, as did a greater portion of the army, that Merrill would be pardoned, he therefore determined not to make any revelation until this point was fully decided.

In a few days after Sumpter departed Merrill, under a strong guard, was removed to the barracks at Tampa Bay, where he was closely confined to await the awful summons which he momentarily expected, and which he felt himself fully prepared to meet!

CHAPTER X.

Sumpter's Arrival in Boston. Mr. Stanwood makes known his Wishes to Effie. Old Meg of the Haunted Glen. Wonderful Disclosure.

'He that is good, will infallibly become better, and he that is bad, will certainly become worse; for vice, virtue, and time, are three things that never stand still.'



AGAIN we return to the earlier scene of our story. Glad are we to get back, and far better can we appreciate our native soil after traversing the morasses and everglades of the Florida Territory. Four weeks have now elapsed since George Sumpter resigned his commission, and he was now in Boston, sedulously pursuing his claims to the hand of our beautiful heroine. Since his arrival he had been an almost constant visitor at the house where she dwelt. Every artifice that the man, whom we shall henceforth call her uncle, could invent to bring Effie and Sumpter together, was put in requisition; and, although she, on the other hand, taxed her powers of invention to avoid him, they frequently met. Sumpter was courteous and affable, and devised every means to ingratiate himself into her favor, but all his advances were received with but little show of encouragement.—Finding that this mode of proceedure did not forward his wishes, he commenced attacking the character of Lieut. Merrill—first by insinuations and then by direct charges; and to corroborate his assertions, he left in her way papers containing letters from a Florida correspondent—who was none other than himself—in which were described perverted accounts of the duel, and the conduct for which he was arraigned before a court-martial. As yet, the result had not been made public, and he reserved this as a climax to his efforts in utterly annihilating his rival's reputation in Effie's estimation.

These several grave asseverations, upon the character of him she loved with all the fervency of first affection, struck deeply to her youthful heart, and notwithstanding the two-fold proof of their truth, yet a shadowy doubt, like the light of a dim taper in the impenetrable darkness of a vaulted cavern, flickered amid the gloom of her mind. She did not—she could not banish his loved image from her heart—there it reigned supreme amid sorrow and distress—amid doubts, fears, and hopes almost decayed. Sumpter she hated more than ever after his zealous efforts in tradu-

cing his unfortunate victim, and she hesitated not, on this point, to reveal her feelings to the man whom she had been taught to call by the endearing name of 'father,' but now the word seemed to stop in her throat. She was becoming daily more and more convinced that this pretended parent was playing towards her a treacherous part, and she no longer gave heed to his advice when contrary to her own feelings. Little did he suspect that she possessed the key to his great secret, although she had repeatedly well-nigh betrayed it by her confusion when he addressed her as his daughter.

One morning, before the usual hour of Sumpter's calling, Stanwood discovered Effie, seated by a window, with her face bathed in tears, and apparently greatly afflicted. He approached her and taking her hand, kindly spake to her.

'Dear daughter,' said he, 'I have long noticed your sadness, and it grieves me sorely to see you unhappy. Full well I know the cause—you love Eugene Merrill—you have heard of his disgrace, and that he is no longer worthy of your love.'

'I have heard all,' said she, sobbingly, 'but I love him still.'

'Banish him from your thoughts—the struggle may be a severe one—but once firmly resolved upon, and you are free.—Throw off those demure looks, and withhold those tears. Come, cheer up—one who would be your husband, and who is every worthy your hand sues for favor from those bright eyes now bedimmed by tears. One whose wealth and family will place you in the first society of our land—you will have all that a kind and affectionate husband can bestow, and be honored and esteemed by the greatest and best.'

'Surely you cannot mean the man who is daily importuning me with his addresses,' asked Effie.

'I mean George Sumpter,' returned Stanwood.

'I could never consent to become his bride, though he possessed all the wealth of the Indies, or though he himself held the highest honors which the country can bestow. In truth I ever disliked him, and now I neither honor, love nor esteem him.'

'Why this strange antipathy against one whose integrity and honor is above impeachment?' asked Stanwood.

'He hates him to whom I have given my heart, and I have good reasons for supposing that he has done every thing within his means to injure him.'

'Remember, Effie, I have pledged my word that you shall be his. You are deceived; your riper judgment will condemn what you now approve.'

'Nay, nay, urge me not. I am resolved never——'

'Hear me further, Effie, ere you make promises that must be revoked.'

'*Must?*' reiterated Effie, startled at the import of the word.

'Hear me, I intreat. You would not bring ruin, disgrace and misery upon the head of your only parent?'

'I trust that my heart is not void of filial love,' answered Effie, with her expressive eyes searchingly watching the countenance of her uncle.

'I will be plain and brief, Effie,' said Mr. Stanwood with earnestness. 'There are circumstances, beyond my control, which renders it urgent that you should unite your fate to that of George Sumpter. These circumstances, I regret, cannot be made known to you at present. In due time all will be revealed, and you will look back with pleasure upon the hour that you heeded your father's advice. On the contrary, should you refuse, my ruin and disgrace will inevitably befall me, and you must share in your parent's misfortune. Were it not for this, Effie, you might have the liberty of bestowing your affections on whomsoever your gentle heart might dictate.'

'Is there no other alternative?' asked Effie, with a penetrating gaze.

'None!'

'Wealth I would willingly sacrifice rather than——'

'But our reputation is at stake,' interrupted Stanwood.

'I cannot perceive how Mr. Sumpter can save us?' said Effie, enquiringly.

'Alas, he possesses the fatal secret which,

if you wed him not, sooner or later must overwhelm me.'

'Can it be possible that my hand is to be the price of his keeping your secret inviolable?'

'It is too true,' said Stanwood with affected sorrow.

'Let him then reveal all!' exclaimed Effie with indignation. 'I cannot experience greater misery than by becoming his bride.'

'Undutiful child,' replied Stanwood in anger; 'homeless—houseless---a beggar! will be your portion, unless you regard my wishes. I'll disown—I'll disinherit you.'

'Perhaps,' said Effie, perceiving the passion of her uncle, 'perhaps I can prevail upon him to grant you a release from your obligations to him.'

'Nay, Effie, it is useless,' replied Stanwood, suppressing the violent emotions which her obstinacy had caused. 'He is inflexible! his whole soul seems wrapped in you, and he would see famine and wretchedness ere he would relinquish his strong hold upon me.'

'Still there can be no harm in the attempt. He will be here I suppose, as usual, this evening.'

'I can have no objections but all your entreaties will be vain,' said Stanwood, as he arose and left the apartment.

'Perfidious man!' thought Effie, 'I now understand fully his motives. He would marry me to a man, who, by his own confession, is destitute of every good principle, and would likewise rob me of my rightful patrimony. I fear him---and, oh, Heaven! should he but mistrust that I, too, know his secret, he would, I almost believe, seek my destruction---perhaps take my life! I cannot flee from him, for he would mistrust the motive. I must remain and await my destiny. This evening I am to meet the heartless Sumpter, and I will use all my arts to cause him to banish the hope of ever obtaining my hand!'

Effie's thoughts now turned to the object which occupied her mind previous to the interview with her father—to Eugene Merrill, and she could not avoid contrasting his character, with all the stains which were rumored upon it, with that of Sumpter's or with that of the man who called her his only daughter!

Mr. Stanwood had sought out Sumpter, and a long conversation was held between them; and it was finally resolved that if she still persisted in her refusal, coercive measures should at once be adopted.

Meanwhile, Effie's reflections were disturbed by the servant's announcing a decrepit old woman, who begged permission to see the lady of the house. Supposing it to be some one soliciting alms, she ordered the servant to admit her. With a slow and tottering gait, she entered the parlor. Effie, touched with pity at beholding her feebleness, arose and said,

'My good woman, be seated in this easy-chair.'

'I can help myself, my child; I am pretty strong for one of my years,' said the old lady as, with an effort, she seated herself.

'Will you have some refreshments?' asked Effie.

'God will bless thee for thy kindness, my dear young lady. I have not tasted food for four-and-twenty hours!'

Effie, without waiting to hear more, ran and ordered some food, which was quickly brought, and placed before the woman, who ate heartily. After she had finished her repast, Effie crammed her bag full of little cakes, and desired her to come every day, and get a supply of food.

'What a sweet voice you have got,' my kind young lady, 'it reminds me of one, who, alas! has been dead many a year.—Let me take thy hand—I can tell a fortin' as well as Moll Pitcher any day!'

'Can you tell fortunes?' said Effie, laughingly.

'Her laugh too—alack-a-day I shall never cease thinking of my poor, sweet mistress. Oh yes,' said the woman in reply to Effie's question. 'I have told many a fortin' and they always turns out jest as I tells 'em. I must put on my glasses—my eyesight has well-nigh failed me,' she continued, taking from her pocket a pair of huge iron-bowed spectacles, and placing them upon her nose. 'Now seat yourself before me and let me take your left hand. I always tells fortins on the left hand.'

Effie, curious to hear what the poor old woman had to say, did as she was directed.

'Her hand, too,' muttered the fortune teller as she inspected it closely. 'This is a pretty hand, sweet lady, and the mate to it shall never be clasped at the altar by him who now seeks——'

'I am glad to hear that, my good woman,' interrupted Effie, with a pleasant smile.

'Yes, my dear lady, thy judgment is correct—he is unworthy of thee. These delicate but well-defined lines tell strange tales You may deem it strange, but I tell thee lady that you are fatherless!'

Effie started, wondering how the old sybil could know this secret, but assuming her wonted composure, and in order to elicit more from her, said,

'Nay, nay—there you are wrong, my good woman.'

'Be patient, lady; the truth of what I say, will ere long quicken thy understanding. Hear me—you love not the man whom you call thy father.'

The maiden blushed at these last words, and bade her proceed with the wonderful revelation she had commenced.

'Thy mother too is dead!' resumed the sybil; she was like thee; let me examine thy sweet features. Heavens! what a likeness!' she exclaimed inaudibly. 'Those sparkling sapphires were truly thy mother's lady,' continued she in distinct tones, 'and those sweet lips and dimpled cheeks, and the expression, too—all, all your mother's. But you have little if any recollection of her—she died when you were a little child. This line,' she continued, again looking at the hand, 'tells me that you have experienced much recent sorrow. Ah! you love—the man of thy heart is far away, in sorrow and in trouble, but he bears his fate with resignation!'

'Where? where?' ejaculated Effie.

'That is beyond the little knowledge I claim to possess above most mortals.'

'But what is his condition?'

'He is in a prison,' guarded by armed soldiers.'

'What will be his fate?'

'That knowledge is also withheld from me.'

'Can you tell me whether he is innocent or guilty of that which he is charged?'

'He was pronounced guilty; but I assure thee, lady, his heart is right.'

'Oh, I thank you for that!' exclaimed Effie, beginning to be credulous.

'You will find all that I say to be true.'

'Tell me more of him, my good woman,' said Effie, earnestly; 'will he be acquitted, or must he be punished?'

'I can tell thee no more of your lover now: but believe him brave and generous to all; true and loving to thee.'

'What of my own fate?'

'Let me see,'said she,examining the palm of her hand intently; 'one, two—yes—you will have two weddings prepared for thee!'

'Two weddings?' reiterated Effie in surprise. 'Impossible! It cannot be!'

'My signs never fail me,' answered the pretended sorceress.

'You cannot possibly mean that I shall ever be the wife of two husbands?'

'Of that I do not pretend to know; but two weddings, mark me, will be prepared for you.'

'Will they be prepared witb my sanction?' asked the astonished Effie.

'There again I am at fault.'

'Can yon tell me anything of the man who claims me as his child?'

The old sybil shook her head in a mysterious manner, which increased the curiosity of Effie.

'Fear not to tell me, my good woman. You have spoken of things that I have believed but dared not speak of. There was a mystery hanging over me which I have nearly unravelled.'

'Indeed!' exclaimed the old woman.—Let me impress upon you the necessity of acting with extreme cautiousness. I am but a poor fortune-teller, but I can fathom the hearts of some men, and read their inmost thoughts as readily as I can see the rays of the pale round moon when they shine through the cracks of my little hovel. Hear me, and beware of thine uncle!'

Effie again started with surprise.

'Nay, start not—he is thy uncle! I know

him better than thou dost. For twelve long years, I have watched him closely as the tigress watches her prey. I have dogged his footsteps when he felt himself secure from observation—like a cat I have stealthily crept upon him while meditating upon his actions, and concocting his infernal designs.'

'Say no more of him, I beseech you,' cried Effie, shuddering at the vehemence of passion, which the old woman displayed. 'But tell me how came you in possession of these terrible secrets?'

'You will one day know all, dear lady. The time is near at hand when his villainy shall be exposed—and your wrongs, and my wrongs be avenged!'

'May I ask your name?'

'I am known as 'Old Meg of the Haunted Glen! A name that well suits my occupation.'

'Does my uncle know you?'

'He knows and familiarly calls me Old Meg! I had a better name once—but it is gone—tainted! and one he knew well. Mark me, when he hears it again it will sound like a death knell, and make his very bones quake with fear! But I must not be seen here by him—he will soon be back—he is now with the gay young southerner hatching schemes to complete thy ruin! Good by, lady—God will bless thee, and his creatures shall yet learn to honor thee!'

With these words 'Old Meg of the Haunted Glen,' hobbled out of the house. Effie watched her footsteps until she was out of sight; and she thought that she walked more firmly and more erect than when she entered the house.

Bewildered and amazed at the singular and startling interview she had had with the old fortune-teller, she had scarcely reason to guide her actions. In this state of mind she retired to her room, and there endeavored to compose herself for an interview with one whom she heartily despised.

CHAPTER XI.

The Promised Interview. Rhapsody of Sumpter. His unfeeling Demand. Effie's noble Conduct. The sad Intelligence. Sorrow and Distress. Effie a Maniac.

"The eve unravelled what the day began."

FLATTERED and delighted beyond his present hopes was George Sumpter upon hearing through Mr. Stanwood, that Effie had actually desired an interview with him; but on learning for what purpose, his happy emotions gave way to angry and bitter feelings; but these he determined to suppress, and assume a bearing that might not be repulsive to the gentle nature of the fascinating creature whose hand he sought.

Evening came, and at an early hour the gay and unrelenting southerner repaired to the mansion of Mr. Stanwood. He found Effie alone, who greeted him as he entered with coldness and formality.

'I am most happy, Miss Effie, to obey even your smallest request,' said he in gentle tones, as he seated himself beside her. 'I learned from your honored parent that you desired an interview with me.'

'It is true,' she replied, 'and I presume he has acquainted you, also, for what purpose I desired it.'

'Not directly; he made a slight intimation to that effect.'

'You possess a certain secret which has an important bearing upon our family?' remarked Effie, enquiringly.

'True; of the utmost consequence!' he replied with emphasis; 'and your father would have me keep it as sacred as if it were my own.'

'To have it known to the world, he tells me would plunge him into the vortex of ruin and irretrievable disgrace.'

'Unquestionably—it cannot be otherwise.'

'May I inquire if, by making it known, you would be benefited thereby?'

'Not in the slightest.'

'And to keep it a secret, can it in any manner affect you injuriously?'

'I assure you that the secret in itself, whether divulged or kept locked in my bosom, can have no bearing upon my reputation, honor or fortune.'

'Then it cannot be presumptuous or im-

proper in me to ask as a favor your promise to keep this secret inviolable?' said Effie, inquiringly.

'It would be joy indeed,' he answered, 'could I but hear from thy sweet lips—'

'Nay, nay,' she interrupted, 'you would not add a condition to that which requires not the slightest sacrifice on your part.'

'Hear me, fair creature,' said Sumpter, after recovering from a slight confusion which her last remark had caused. 'From the first hour I beheld your wondrous beauty———'

'This, Mr. Sumpter,' interrupted Effie, 'is foreign to the object for which I desired to see you.'

'This is an opportunity I have long sought for to explain my motives and wishes, and I shall esteem it as a favor if you will but listen to me.'

Effie was silent, and Sumpter proceeded.

'To say that from the firs happy moments I accidentally met in your society, I have truly loved thee, would but faintly express the passion which glows within me—I have adored, have worshipped thee with my whole soul! I saw thee courted, flattered and caressed by others, and it filled me with hatred for those who dared to approach into thy lovely presence. I saw that you favored one whom I had other causes for despising, and who is unworthy of a single approving glance from thy love-beaming eyes! Meanwhile I have borne your disdainful and repulsive looks with a patience past all endurance! and I swore that every obstacle which stood in my path, at every hazard, should be surmounted—regarding neither the common impulses of humanity, nor the laws of Heaven or of earth, to gain the haven of love and bliss which I so fervently desired!'

'Oh, horror!' exclaimed Effie, as she arose to leave him, but he implored her to remain, and she again seated herself.

'Yes, to gain your hand,' he resumed, 'I have committed acts which my better nature revolts at! While in the office of Mr. Singleton—'

'Singleton?' repeated Effie with surprise, recollecting the name mentioned in her father's will as the Executor of the estate.'

'Yes, Isaac Singleton, the somewhat noted Attorney of Court Street, in whose office I studied the profession of law,' continued Sumpter. 'While pursuing my studies, I accidentally heard the substance of an interview between him and your father, which so excited my curiosity, that I immediately resolved, in furtherance of the one great object of my soul, to probe it to the bottom. My good fortune thus led me to an astounding discovery, which I determined, if other means failed, should be the talismanic power whereby I should ultimately obtain your hand. Finding that all my advances were met with scornful treatment from you, although your father favored my suit, I at length unfolded to him my great discovery, and also informed him of the ill-success I had experienced in winning your favor. He was bewildered and amazed, and I received offers of large sums of money if I would swear secrecy until after his decease. All offers of this kind I rejected; and told him of the precious and priceless gift which I demanded! He embraced my offer with delight, and drew up an obligation to that effect, which I have in my possession duly signed and sealed. I need not tell you of the inestimable gift which he promises to bestow upon me—that is known to you already.'

'And do you intend still to demand the fulfilment of this obligation.'

'I have taken a solemn oath so to do.'

'Renounce the impious oath, and your own conscience will tell you that it meets the approval of God and man!' exclaimed Effie with spirit and dignity.

'Never!' returned Sumpter.

'Then perish all your hopes!' exclaimed the indignant maiden, falling upon her knees in an attitude of prayer. 'Before High Heaven I swear that rather than become your wife, I will become a beggar, loathed and despised by all mankind! I will tear the beauty from these cheeks, and render myself an object that you, George Sumpter, will turn from with disgust!'

Sumpter was surprised and amazed at the indignant spirit manifested by her whose gentleness formed one of her attrac-

tions, but he felt not the full import of her words.

'Nevertheless, you shall be mine!' said he, 'your father's will is law!'

'Flatter not yourself with this fallacy.'

'Remember, you are yet a minor, and until you become of age his control admits of no dispute.'

'Do you call yourself a man, thus to allow a hopeless passion to be an incentive to the baseness which you propose?'

'I view it not hopelessly,' said he, in a soothing tone; 'I still hope to see you look kindly and affectionately upon me. Let me prove by acts of devotion and kindness that I am not what I may have seemed. Love I admit has carried me beyond the bounds of discretion. You can save me from committing greater sins, and make me the true and affectionate being that once I was.'

'Do you confess your selfishness in persecuting and depriving me the liberty of bestowing my affections on whom I please? Know, too, that I love as fervently and truly as yourself. Know, also, that I am the betrothed of him whom you have followed with your unrelenting vengeance!'

'He is no longer worthy your smallest consideration. He has disgraced the profession to which he belonged!'

'I know that there are rumors afloat prejudicial to his character, but I hope to find that they are greatly exaggerated.'

'You will, then, be greatly disappointed. The truth has not half reached your ears. Listen, and I will recount a few of his disgraceful acts. First he was severely reprimanded for his unbecoming conduct in an affair of honor.'

'Of that I have heard,' remarked Effie, 'but were the particulars correctly reported?'

'They were rendered more favorable than the facts justify.'

'Were you not one of the parties in this duel?'

'I was, and can bear solemn witness to his outrageous behavior.'

'But did he not,' enquired Effie, 'on the same day, perform a praiseworthy action by saving the lives of three persons from drowning? If this be true I can forgive him for participating in the duel.'

'There was such a rumor, but it proved to be wholly unfounded. The noble deed was performed by another officer of his regiment named Merton. The slight resemblance of names caused the error.'

'I am sorry to hear it. But he shew great bravery in the battle with the Indians.'

'None who was in the action on that bloody day award to him that credit. It is true, however, that the little detachment under his command, performed deeds worthy of applause.'

'It is stated that he was struck down by a shot from the enemy?'

'It is true—I saw him as he fell; and I afterwards learned that he almost miraculously escaped death through the medium of a golden casket, which resisted the force of the ball; otherwise it would have passed directly through his heart.'

'Ah! can it be possible?' ejaculated Effie, greatly surprised. 'I thank Heaven that his life was thus spared. Did you see the casket?'

'I did not. He would not even allow the surgeon to remove it from his neck.'

'Faithful still!' thought Effie.

'You probably know of his more recent conduct, for which he is now under sentence of death?' remarked Sumpter.

'Alas! I have heard of all! But it is the prevailing opinion that he will be pardoned,' said Effie.

'Such indeed has been the opinion, ere the late intelligence from Tampa Bay had reached here?'

'And pray what is that?' she asked with eagerness.

'Here is a paper containing a letter from a Florida correspondent, dated a few hours previous to the time stating that all was in preparation for Merrill's execution, and that unless a pardon should arrive by noon on that day, he would be executed!—This intelligence is corroborated by a letter dated at one o'clock, from a private source, which says that Lieut. Merrill is no more! He was shot——'

Effie for a moment gazed in the eyes of Sumpter—her cheeks turned pale—her lips

quivered—her whole frame trembled—and feebly articulating the word 'dead!' fainted and fell senseless upon the floor!

Sumpter, really alarmed, rung the bell violently—the servants quickly answered the summons, and after bathing her temples and applying other restoratives, she gradually opened her eyes, and staring to those about her, faintly spoke, while she almost gasped for breath:

'Did you say shot? dead?'

'So the account reads,' replied the heartless wretch seated beside her.

Several moments elapsed ere the feeble girl again spoke. Sumpter, in the meanwhile, left the house, not well pleased with his reception, and filled with astonishment at the spirit which she had manifested towards him.

'Merciful Heavens!' exclaimed Effie, as soon as her persecutor had left her. 'What sorrowful tidings! Eugene! dead?—did he say dead? or do I dream? Oh, God! what a dreadful feeling is here! My brain is on fire!' She gazed around the room with a vacant stare and swooned in the arms of an attendant!

The beautiful Effie Stanwood had become almost a maniac!

CHAPTER XII.

Tampa Bay. Night before the Execution. Lee visits the Prison. The Fatal Day. Preparation for the Execution of the severe Sentence. Interuption Arrival of an old Acquaintance.

'Friendship! the mysterious cement of the soul!
Sweet'ner of life, and solder of society!
I owe thee much."

We take the liberty once more of transporting our patient readers back to the ungenial climate of Florida; but they cannot complain, for we do it with greater facility than can ever be accomplished by steam or lightning propellers. Like the magician we say *'presto change!'* and from Boston to Tampa Bay, is but one stride—the work of one moment!

It was on one of those lovely starlight nights, so peculiar to the southern heavens, that Lieutenant Lee left his quarters for the guarded prison of the unfortunate young officer, lying there under sentence of death! No pardon, as was anticipated, having arrived from Washington, and two reprieves having been granted, the last hour of which would expire on the following day at twelve o'clock,—it was concluded by the commanding officer of the post, that the government had resolved that he should be executed, as an awful warning to all others who were engaged in the campaign of extermination against the Seminoles; and this resolution, he ordered preparations to be made, to carry into effect at the expiration of the reprieve.

With this knowledge did Lee, the warm-hearted friend of Merrill, gain from his commander, permission to visit the prisoner. He found Merrill gazing in silence through the casement of his prison, at the magnificent starry panorama above him.

So absorbed was his mind in meditating upon the mighty works of his Creator, abstracted entirely from the grosser material of this earth, that he did not uotice the entrance of his friend, who had come for a last sad interview with him in this world.

'Lieutenant Merrill!' said Lee.

'Ah, good evening my friend!' responded the prisoner.

'How fares it with you?'

'Well! I have been star-gazing,' said he with a smile. 'I admire the wonderful beauty of the southern constellations. I think they suppass the northern.'

'I am not much of an astronomer,' replied

Lee, yet I have often marked the clearness of the evening atmosphere and the myriads of suns and planets that make our nights in this region far more pleasant than the day.'

'You speak truly,' resumed the prisoner, 'but to-night, especially, there seems to be a peculiar charm about the celestial arch that I never felt, nor could even faintly appreciate before. Perhaps it is because I gaze to-night for the last time at these heavenly bodies. Yes, my friend, my glass is nearly run,—to-morrow's meridian sun will end the sum of my existence.'

'I trust that despatches may arrive ere the time has passed, proclaiming your pardon.'

'Name it not—there is no hope.'

'Our commander must be prevailed upon to grant another reprieve.'

'Do not, my friend, give me false hopes—I am prepared for the execution!—I shall die like a man!—like a soldier!'

'May heaven avert the awful decree!' exclaimed Lee, in solemn accents.

'Talk not thus; for well you know my doom; and you have come to take a final leave, and hear my last requests, and for this kindness you have the thanks of one already dead to the world! and may the Almighty bless you for it!'

Lee could not restrain the tears which were fast falling from his eyes.

'Come—come, my friend! this becomes not a stout heart like thine!' returned Merrill. 'Suppress those sympathetic tears—be manly—as a soldier should ever be. I need thy counsel—thy confidence ere we part!'

'Command me,' sobbed Lee. 'I will be faithful to your least request.'

'Now you show yourself a man. I should be a coward myself, in these brief hours of my earthly career, to see my friends in sorrow at my fate.'

'You look upon death, my dear friend, I must confess, with a calmness that I never before saw equalled. Even the poor bedridden invalid, who for years has been looking towards the tomb, betrays far more fear of death, than you, in the prime and vigor of manhood, honored, beloved, and esteemed by all.'

'What is there fearful in death? a momentary sensation of pain, and one is ushered into a new life—an existence which has no termination. I hope, aye, I feel assured that a blessed immortality will be mine—that when this mortal coil of sin and sorrow is shuffled off, the spirit will ascend to the Eternal Father who gave it! This is a prospect not sad and gloomy, but bright and glorious—brighter and more beautiful than earth can boast.'

'But the sentence is unjust!'

'I have long since done weighing the matter in my mind,' continued Merrill; 'to me it is of trifling consequenee. I had rather die innocently than guiltily.'

'True, but will not the vengeance of a just God punish whoever seeks thy life?'

'Those who have condemned me, I doubt not conscientiously believed that they had but performed their duty and allegiance to the laws of our country. And now, my kind friend, hear my last requests. Behold this chain that hangs about my neck—attached to it is a golden casket containing a miniature, which saved my life amid the carnage of the battle-field. I have promised never to remove it from my neck while living, nor allow any hands but the fair one who gave the precious memento to me. After the execution, take it from my neck—here is my written authority for so doing. The lady of which this is the counterfeit, lives in an eastern city—this is her address,' continued he giving him a card. 'When you return to the north seek her out, and with her hands place it in her possession. Tell her—oh tell her—' He hesitated to give way to the violence of grief which overcome him. 'Tell her,' he at length continued, 'that I loved her till my latest breath—that her love was the only tie that could have bound me to the earth. Tell her that I died blessing her. Do you understand all?!

'Perfectly.'

'Do you promise faithfully to perform the dying wish of one who loves, honors, and esteems you?'

'Shall I bind myself by an oath ?'

'No—give me but your word—your simple promise.'

'I do,' answered Lee, 'to the letter of your instructions.'

'Thanks! thanks! my friend!' and the unfortunate man again burst into tears.

No words can express the grief which pervaded the soul of the prisoner's companion in arms. He clung around his neck and begged of him to sue for another reprieve;—in agony he prayed to his maker that his life might be spared;—upon his knees he beseeched the prisoner to make an effort to escape! He vowed to assist him, and declared he would induce others to join with him in the attempt. But his prayers, his intreaties, fell like a dead weight upon the ears of the condemned. He would not heed nor even listen to his words so full of pure heartfelt enthusiasm in his behalf.

Lee, finding all his endeavors crushed, at a late hour, left his friend, after an affectionate farewell. He returned directly to his own quarters overwhelmed with amazement and sorrow at the singular pertinacity which his doomed friend had exhibited.

On the subsequent morning the sun arose in unclouded beauty—its first bright rays were ushered in by the roaring of minute guns and the solemn tolling of a bell from the fortress of Tampa Bay. The reveille was sounded upon muffled drums, accompanied by melancholy minor strains from the shrill ear-piercing fife. Notwithstanding the brightness of old Sol, there was a sombre and gloomy look about and within the fortress. Each countenance wore a mournful aspect, and groups of officers and soldiers stood in different places, conversing, but in sentences of mysteriou import. The joyous laugh was not heard, not a smile brightened the countenance of a solitary individual, and each one spoke in tones so low that indicated there was something unusual that engrossed their whole attention, and changed the most gay and volatile into grief and mourning.

Rapidly the hours of the morning flew by, and at eleven o'clock—one hour previous to the time appointed for the execution—a military procession, with arms reversed, and the martial band playing the mournful strains of a dead march, issued slowly forth from the gates of the barracks and continued their way until they reached a plat of ground, about half a mile distant from the fortress, where it halted. The solemn and impressive services of the church were performed, in which the prisoner, yet calm and dignified, took a prominent part. The services being concluded, the condemned officer was prepared for the execution of the awful sentence. At his own request his eyes were not bandaged, and he knelt down before the coffin, facing the guard, who were to perform the sanguinary duty imposed upon them. Merrill did not betray the slightest symptom of trepidation, and his countenance indicated a calmness that was truly wonderful; indeed it has often been remarked that there was not one assembled to witness the execution who did not manifest greater terror than the condemned himself. With one foot planted firmly on the ground, with his body mainly resting upon his left knee, and his right arm stretched forth, he awaited the dreadful signal that was to sever the thread of his existence.

The guard consisted of six men; an equal number of muskets were brought forth; three of which, in the presence of witnesses, were charged with ball and three were charged with blank cartridges. The soldiers selected the muskets without the knowledge of those which contained the blank charges, or those which contained the swift-winged messengers of death!

All was now in readiness, and the first word of command was given—the men raised their muskets to a shoulder, and the officer slowly but with emphasis, exclaimed:

'Ready! Aim!———'

Instead of the word, 'Fire!' he shouted,

'Recover arms!'

At the moment of giving the word, a loud screaming noise penetrated the ears of all present. Every eye was turned towards the direction from whence the sound proceeded—it momentarily increased, and the

quick steps of a flying steed was distinctly heard. In a moment a horseman issued from a clump of trees, and with the speed of the wind reached the place of execution. The moment he reined in his steed both fell to the earth—the horse dead! and the rider fainting with exhaustion!

The air now rung with joyous shouts of 'pardon! pardon!'

'Oh God! have I arrived in time?' feebly ejaculeted the prisoner.

One of the officers stepped up immediately and enquired if he was a bearer of despatches?

'Does he yet live?' asked the half frantic man.

'He does!'

'Thank Heaven that his life is spared!' exclaimed the man with joy.

'Did you bring any despatches from government?' again asked the officer.

'No!'

'Who are you?'

'Edward Dawson, private, 4th Regiment of Artillery.'

'What is your business?'

'I have come to save the innocent man who was sentenced to suffer death! I am the guilty one! I am the cause of his misfortunes. To the commanding officer of this post I will reveal all! Lead me to him quickly.

Merrill was escorted back to his place of confinement, while Dawson was led into the presence of the chief officer. To him he confessed his crime, detailing every incident of the hellish scheme, and implicating Sumpter as the projector of the plot. He confessed, also, that in order to reach the post in time, he had stolen the favorite steed of his colonel, and had rode him fifty miles through the enemy's country. He now gave himself up as a prisoner, and begged only that his life might be spared until the entire innocence of Merrill should be clearly established.

He was placed under guard, and on the next day he was summoned before a military tribunal for a more thorough examination. Every thing that he said seemed so straight-forward and plausible, besides so disinterested in blaming himself and exculpating Merrill, that full credence was given to his confession.

On being asked why he did not make his confession earlier, he replied by saying that it was generally believed that he would ultimately be pardoned, thinking that in case he was not, he should have ample time to save himself from committing the crime of murder. But great was his dismay, when he heard accidentally from one of his officers that poor Merrill was to be executed on the day following. In broad day-light he had stolen the colonel's horse and deserted.

'And did you know,' asked the commander, 'that death is the penalty of the deserter?'

'Yes, yes, I know all and am ready to die the moment he is freed from all danger.'

'So far from inflicting the punishment of death upon you for your crimes, I shall order your discharge immediately on the receipt of despatches from Washington, sanctioning the proceedings and decision of this military tribunal.'

'But you do not mean to discharge me, after such outrageous conduct?' ejaculated Dawson, incredulously.

'Yes, I pardon your offences, and applaud your recent noble conduct, as well as your seeming penitence.'

'And Lieutenant Merrill?'

'He is fully acquitted and his discharge shall be ordered forthwith.'

'Heaven be praised!' exclaimed Dawson, with earnestness.

'There is one thing more I wish to ask you,' said the officer, 'which still seems unaccountable; and that is, how you could be guilty of jeopardizing the life of a human being, or even exposing him to punishment, after he had once risked his own life in a hazardous but successful attempt in saving yours.'

'Saved my life? When? How?'

'Saved you from a watery grave—here, in Tampa Bay, with two others,' replied the officer.

'What? Lieutenant Merrill?'

'Yes—the same whom you have so foully wronged.'

PREPARATION FOR THE EXECUTION.

The condemned Lieutenant about to be executed, when his life is spared by the timely arrival of Ned Dawson.

'Can it be possible? Saved my life? and I—what a wretch! I could torment myself to death with a good relish! I deserve to be gibbeted! The worst torture ot the inquisition would be too mild for such an ungrateful dog as———'

His speech was interrupted by the entrance of Lieutenant Merrill, in full uniform, accompanied by his friend Lee. He was congratulated by his fellow officers for his narrow escape.

Dawson gazed at him for a moment, and hung his head upon his breast. Advancing towards him, he fell upon his knees, and meekly said:

'I deserve not your pardon! I do not ask it! I have forever disgraced myself, by attempting to disgrace you! Kill me—for by your hands I ought to die!'

'Arise! I freely forgive you!' replied Merrill!'

'Forgive me? *you* forgive me?' ejaculated Dawson, surprised.

'Yes! freely! You have been by far the greatest sufferer.'

'I'll accept forgiveness only on one condition!' returned Dawson. 'And that is, that you will never pardon that villain, Sumpter. He was at the bottom of all, and made a cat's paw of me—and I was just insane or foolish enough to let him. I should just like to have him within my clutches for a few moments, I'd skin him alive—I would, by Jupiter! You won't forgive him, will you?'

'Your request is a very singular one,' but you need not give yourself the least trouble on that point.'

'I have a few words to say to you in private, concerning Sumpter,' said Dawson, whispering in Merrill's ear.

'I'll attend you directly,' answered Merrill. He excused himself to his friend for a short absence, and went forth towards the beach with Dawson.

The latter narrated to Eugene all the particulars of the career of Sumpter, commencing from the time of the challenge, in Boston, up to the period of his resignation, facts which he had learned from his own lips and from observation. He explained the motives of Sumpter's unceasing persecutions, and warned Merrill to avoid him.

'You do not think that I stand in fear of the contemptible villain?' asked the latter.

'You do not fully understand me. I am confident that you would not turn to the right or left, should a dozen Sumpter's face you. But I mean that you must beware of the assassin!'

'Why, he has not courage to stab even in the dark!'

'I am well aware of that, too; but he would employ a dozen desperate men to take your life, if he could not accomplish it otherwise.'

'I will profit by your suggestion; be assured I will be on my guard. Can you tell me where he is now?' asked Merrill.

'In Boston, I suppose; and you probably can guess the motive for which he has gone thither. He swore that he would marry the girl or ruin her father.'

'Ruin her father, did you say? How?' asked Eugene, eagerly.

'He pretends that he is in possession of some important family secret, by which he rules Mr. Stanwood, as with a talisman!'

'Family secret?' mused Merrill. 'It may be so—yes, yes—I now conceive, what has always appeared unaccountable to me, why Mr. Stanwood placed such entire confidence in Sumpter, when he had certain evidence that his habits were dissipated and dissolute. Where did you become acquainted with Sumpter?'

'I first knew him in South Carolina, but our acquaintance was slight until we went to Boston.'

'Indeed! I thought I had seen your countenance before.'

'I am heartily ashamed of my conduct while there; but I have been taught a severe lesson, and now I mean, if possible, to make amends for my past viciousness—yes, Ned Dawson, henceforth, will be a reformed man!'

'I applaud your resolution, and if you remain in the army, perhaps I may be of service to you.'

'I thank you for your kindness; but I hope to get an honorable discharge from the service, and devote myself to some oc-

cupation or profession better suited to my capacities.'

'Still I can do you a favor,' replied Merrill. 'I intend to make immediate application for a furlough; at the same time I can use my little influence to procure your discharge.'

'You are too kind!' exclaimed Dawson. 'May Heaven grant me an opportunity, at some future day, to repay your generosity!'

The officer and soldier now returned to the barracks where they separated.

On the following morning Merrill repaired to the quarters of the chief officer of the post, and asked for leave of absence for three months. He also made application for Dawson's discharge from the army. It being necessary for the commandant to send the applications to the Adjutant General at Washington, six weeks elapsed before an answer was received. Luckily, both requests were granted; and on the next day, Merrill took leave of the many warm-hearted and sincere friends he had gained since his acquittal, and in company with Dawson, left Tampa Bay in a vessel bound to New-Orleans.

While our hero is pursuing his journey towards his native city, we will note the proceedings of several other characters connected with our story.

CHAPTER XIII.

The beautiful Maniac. The Mysterious Package. Happy Discovery. Mr. Stanwood and the Attorney. Diabolical Scheme.

'She looked on many a face with vacant eye,
On many a token without knowing what—
She saw them watch her without asking why,
And reck'd not who around her pillow sat,—
Not speechless, though she spoke not: not a sigh
Relieved her thoughts,—dull silence and quick chat
Were tried in vain by those who served.'

CRITICAL, indeed, was the situation of Effie Stanwood, for weeks following the dreadful shock she had experienced, upon hearing the mournful tidings, falsely communicated to her by the unfeeling and unrelenting Sumpter. For many days she was in a state of delirium, bordering upon wild insanity: at times, however, she manifested symptoms of returning reason, and deep melancholy the while sat upon her once happy and smiling countenance. It was a sorry sight for those who were her companions; and even the stony heart of her uncle was often moved with sympathetic emotions; and for hours would the truly wretched man pace to and fro his library, contemplating his own unmerciful deeds, and endeavoring to quench the hell that raged within him! More than once did feelings of a better nature prompt him to make amends for his crimes—atone and reveal all! But then the demi-devil—the accursed Singleton—would appear to his vivid imagination; and thoughts of death! the scaffold! would again seal up the very fountain of humanity!

Upon one occasion, and while enduring the bitterest remorse, he heard the light but slow footsteps of the demented Effie, approaching the library. Not wishing to add new pangs to the anguish which tortured his soul, he avoided seeing her by entering the apartment adjoining. Smiling sadly, and uttering incoherent expressions, she entered the library, and seated herself in an arm-chair at the centre-table. Her eyes glared wildly but cautiously about the room, as if to satisfy herself that she was alone, and then taking from her bosom a sealed package, she thus, in mournful accents, gave vent to the thoughts of her disordered mind:

'He said he was dead—yes, that a bullet pierced his heart! He's in heaven, now—oh, how glad I am that he's in so happy a place—I shall go there, too, and there we shall meet, never again to part! But not yet—I cannot die—I have much to do ere that blessed change frees me from this

earthly thraldom! Yes, this he gave me,' continued Effie, as she gazed upon the seal, 'and charged me when he was dead to break the seal! I have waited patiently with the hope that I had been deceived! but, alas, 'twas a vain hope! and I must not wait longer—the promise must be fulfilled. But should he still live, would he not frown upone me? oh no, he has a heart to forgive! Moreover, he said when I heard of his death to break the seal! Yes, those were his words and my duty must be performed.' Saying which, she pressed the seal, that bore her lover's signet, to her lips, and carefully proceeded to break it.

Meanwhile Mr. Stanwood, who had tarried in the adjoining room, had heard the melancholy accents which had fallen from her lips, and cautiously approaching the door, he was enabled to witness her actions without being himself observed.

Effie unfolded the envelope and the first object that arrested her attention was the miniature of Eugene Merrill. Snatching it up, she exclaimed with a shrill scream of delight:

'He lives! he lives!' and gazing upon it abstractedly for a few moments, she thus continued: 'Yes, 'tis him! those are his eyes—his lips—his manly forehead—his noble and commanding figure—and he gazes upon me with an approving smile and a look of love!'

She placed it carefully within her bosom, and without regarding the papers which the envelope contained, she flew to her room in a state of happy but delirious ecstacy.

As soon as Effie had left the library, Mr. Stanwood re-entered, and discovered the papers which Effie, in her excess of joy at discovering the likeness of her lover, had entirely unnoticed. Upon examination he found that they were the deeds and the last will and testament of Eugene Merrill. His surprise was increased when he discovered that the will bequeathed to Effie Stanwood the whole of the large property, represented by the deeds. A damning thought now flitted across his brain, that these estates might easily be added to his own. For a long time he sat in his chair contemplating the vile scheme which his avarice had suggested; but at length an impulse of a better nature influenced his heart, and prompted him to take no advantage of the papers and to place them immediately in the hands of his neice; and he was about to put his good intention into effect, when he was interrupted by the unceremonious entrance of the tormenting Attorney, Isaac Singleton. Confused at this unexpected meeting, he started back and attempted to conceal them from the penetrating curiosity of the lynx-eyed Attorney, but it was useless, for the villain had stood at the threshold of the door, and had learned all that Mr. Stanwood himself knew in regard to them.

Without betraying that he knew ought of the matter which his monied victim tried to conceal from him, he quietly seated himself without uttering a word.

Stanwood, incensed at the imperturbable and impertinent manner of the Attorney, at length addressed him:

'Mr. Singleton, you are intrusive. There is a bell-knob upon my outer door, which *gentlemen* make use of when they desire to enter my house!'

'Humph! *Your* house!' muttered Singleton, smiling contemptuously.

'Sir, your business with me?' demanded Stanwood.

'I come to ask you for my annuity of three thousand dollars!'

'But the year has not yet expired?'

'True; but was the particular day specified in our agreement? What if I had demanded it in advance, would you have dared to refuse me?'

'Say no more!' answered Stanwood. 'I would not bandy words with you for twice three thousand! There is your money,' he continued, as he took several bank notes from a small escrutoire and handed them to Singleton.

'And there is my receipt for the same,' added the latter.

For several moments neither party spoke. The Attorney manifesting no symptoms of leaving the house, and Stanwood wishing him out of his sight, the latter arose as if he intended retiring himself, in order that the former might take the hint. But this movement did not succeed, for the intruder

quietly kept his seat. At length Stanwood, becoming impatient, said:

'You will excuse me, Mr. Singleton. I have an engagement at twelve o'clock.'

'And so have I; but it lacks nearly an hour to that time. Be seated, I have learned a piece of information, this morning, that may be of interest to you.'

'Indeed! what is it?' demanded Stanwood, re-seating himself.

'Eugene Merrill, the possessor of one of the most valuable estates in this city, is dead!'

'It is so reported.'

'He loved Effie Stanwood.'

'True.'

'He was her betrothed.'

'Your information I have already learned,' returned Stanwood, impatiently.

'It is supposed by some of his connexions that he left a greater portion if not the whole of his property to your daughter.'

'And what if he did? He had a perfect right so to do. The documents are now in my possession; and she is not yet aware of her good fortune.'

'Indeed!' said the Attorney, musingly.—'And I dare presume it is decided that the same care shall be taken of this estate that was taken in managing your brother's?'

'No!' exclaimed Stanwood. 'Devil as thou art, you cannot tempt me to commit another crime! These papers shall be surrendered into her hands as soon as she recovers from the severe mental malady that now afflicts her.'

'What? you will not suffer this splendid prize to slip so easily through your fingers?'

'Yes! and if it were double I would do it.'

'Weak man, by taking possession of this property, you cannot be injured,' resumed Singleton. 'You are soon to get rid of the girl, you know?'

'How? what mean you?' ejaculated Stanwood.

'Ha, ha! You thought to keep the secret from me! George Sumpter is to be the husband of the girl! and in consideration thereof, he is to keep your secret, and remove his bride to the south! Is it not so?'

'I do not deny it; but in what possible manner can this interest or affect you?'

'Hear me, and you shall know,' said the Attorney with an air of seriousness. 'You gave me your word that none knew of this matter save ourselves; when at the same time you had not forgotten your compact with Sumpter. Now, sir, you have attempted to deceive me—you have forfeited your promise, and if I choose I can as easily forfeit mine!'

'But you cannot—dare not———'

'Oh, I dare do anything! Now listen to my proposal. Cause Sumpter and the girl to be married forthwith! hurry them off! and then take possession of this princely estate. Allow me to share it with you, and I will forever leave this country, and thus you will not only add tens of thousands to your immense fortune, but rid yourself of all fears at once.'

'Should I listen to these outrageous terms,' answered Stanwood, 'I could have no positive assurance that your word would be kept.'

'My actions shall convince you. I will first sell all my real estate in this country, and depart for France as soon as the marriage has taken place. I will take *your* written promise that you will remit to me half of the present appraised value of the Merrill estate, within one year after my departure.'

'I accede to your terms,' said Stanwood, promptly, 'provided the marriage can be consummated.'

'In that there surely can be no difficulty.'

'I fear more than you apprehend. She has, against all my intreaties, peremptorily refused to marry Sumpter. Besides, her grief, at the tidings of the death of her lover has well-nigh unstrung her nerves, and impaired the saneness of her mind. For hours does she talk of him, and laugh and weep alternately. She now entertains the idea that he still lives, and seems in a state of ecstatic bliss, though the wildness of her eyes, her incoherent language, betrays the lunacy of her brain.'

'So much the better for our purpose!' remarked the soulless Attorney.

Their conversation was now interrupted by the ringing of the door-bell, and George Sumpter was announced and entered the library. He manifested no surprise upon seeing the Attorney in conference with Mr. Stanwood, for he had recently several interviews with the legal gentleman at his office respecting the discovery that he had made prior to his departure for the south, and his compact with Mr. Stanwood, by virtue of which he was to demand the beautiful Effie for his bride.

'You have come in good time,' said Singleton. 'We were arranging the preliminaries for your marriage, and I see nothing to prevent the union taking place within a day or two at farthest. Your intentions have been published the length of time required by the statute.'

'I care not how soon,' replied Sumpter. 'Let it be to-morrow or next day.'

'If the dreadful sacrifice is ever to be made, let it come as quickly as possible,' said Mr. Sumpter, despairingly. 'But I had rather lose half my fortune, than to give my sanction to this unjust and hellish act.'

'And I would not release her for *all* the wealth you possess,' returned Sumpter.

'I see not how it can be,' remarked the Attorney. 'Ruin and the vengeance of the laws will be our inevitable fate, if the obligations be not fulfilled.'

'If there is no remedy let the worst come. Let the infernal plot go on!' exclaimed Stanwood.

'Then to-morrow let the wedding be,' returned Singleton.

'But who shall perform the ceremony?' asked Sumpter.

'Leave that to me. Being a Justice of the Peace, I am fully competent to perform the marriage myself, and in case I cannot engage the services of a reverend gentleman of my acquaintance, who never scruples at anything when gold is to be the fee, I will do myself the honor of officiating.'

'I care not, providing all the proceedings are perfectly legal,' said Sumpter.

'Mr. Stanwood,' returned the Attorney, 'you most have your daughter prepared to undergo the solemn rites. You understand me,' said he significantly.

'I heed no more of your promptings,' replied Stanwood. 'Since I have become a devil under your tuition, every means necessary to accomplish our unmerciful scheme, will readily suggest themselves.'

'Ah! very complimentary,' said the Attorney, smiling. 'You will one day become worthy of your master. I must look after my laurels. But fifty years hence we shall be on an equality.'

'How so?'

'Death levels all.'

'Indeed! I thought you aspired to be his Satanic Majesty's Prime Minister,' said Stanwood, satirically.

'Seriously, if I believed in such a place as Milton has so eloquently described, I think I might have some ambitious yearnings,' replied Singleton.

'And you do not believe it, or how came you possessed of traits and powers that belong to none but the devil and his children?' asked Stanwood.

'Did you know my origin and history, you would readily comprehend. Suffice it to say they emanated here—and here!' said Singleton, striking his own breast and forehead. 'I was the offspring of a polluted mother—nursed in the cradle of poverty and wretchedness—schooled in the dens of poverty and vice and infamy—and my heart hardened by the kicks and buffets and scorns and threats of an inhuman world. When I verged into manhood, I forsook the wretched haunts of *poor* devils, and raised myself into the gilded parlors and saloons of *rich* ones; and among them for years have I revelled and rioted. Many a gilded villain has been compelled to pay me tribute, that he might live and enjoy his own plunder. My experience has taught me that the hearts of men vary but little, notwithstanding there is a wide chasm which divides the inmates of miserable hovels and cellars, and the princely palaces and parlors of the rich and great. In the one nought but sin and misery are to be found; and in the other, apparent happi-

ness and luxurious comforts abound, yet the wide difference in the hearts of men in these two stations does not exist. But I cannot spend my moments in philosophizing, so gentlemen I'll bid you a good day. At what hour shall the nuptial ceremony be performed?'

'At eleven o'clock to-morrow, if it meet with the wishes of the bridegroom.'

'As it may please you,' answered Sumpter.

'I shall be punctual,' remarked the Attorney, as he left the library, leaving Mr. Stanwood and Sumpter to arrange the minor matters for the approaching nuptials.

'That man is a great villain!' remarked Sumpter, after the Attorney had gone.

'He's a devil!' added Stanwood. 'He would contaminate a saint!'

'I believe it; for I learned more villainy while in his office, than I have ever learned out of it. But he'll get his just deserts at some future day.'

'If he does not, both Heaven and earth are void of justice.

CHAPTER XIII.

A meeting of Old Acquaintances. Despair of Merrill. The Bridal Day. The Stranger Guest. Barbarous Conduct of Sumpter. His defeat. Triumph of Merrill. The preeious Trio in Jail.

"Their lives to selfish ends decreed,
Through blood and rapine they proceed;
No anxious thoughts of ill repute
Suspend th' impetuous and unjust pursuit."

BEFORE narrating the several incidents that transpired on the appointed nuptial day, it is essential to the true development of our story to inform our readers of the arrival of Lieutenant Merrill and George Sumpter, on the day preceding the interview of the precious trio who figure in our last chapter. Without making known their arrival they took lodgings in an obscure but respectable part of the city. Dawson immediately sought out the residence of his quondam friend, but he was not successful in finding him, until the following day, when he accidentally met him on his return from the mansion of Mr. Stanwood. Sumpter was greatly surprised and Dawson was apparently equally so. After exchanging cordial salutations, the latter enquired the news.

'Give me joy, my boy!' answered Sumpter exultingly. 'I have great news! glorious news! My success is complete! I have triumphed!'

'Explain.'

'She's mine! my dear fellow! she's mine!'

'What? married?'

'Not yet! but shall be to-morrow!'

'Indeed! to whom, pray?'

'Why, to whom can it be but Effie Stanwood, the charmingly beautiful, the accomplished, and the admired of all admirers!'

'To-morrow did you say?' enquired Dawson.

'Ay, to-morrow my friend; and you shall make one of the guests. It comes off at twelve o'clock—be punctual!'

'It will be quite impossible. I have a friend in town with whom I have an engagement.'

'Oh never mind your friend; you must be a witness of my marriage. Bring your friend with you. Why not?'

'I hardly believe he would attend; however I will bear him your invitation,' answered Dawson. 'But how is it, has the girl forgotten her old flame, hey?'

'What do you mean, the disgraced, the condemned Merrill?'

'The same.'

'No—but what care I for that? She weeps and moans like a child for its mother. But once mine, and she will come to her senses. I intend to leave immediately for the South, and the excitement of travel and receiving the attentions of new friends will dissipate from her mind all thoughts of the ruined Merrill.'

'Well, excuse me now,' said Dawson, as he arose to depart.

'You will not fail to come?'

'If possible, be assured I will be there.'

Dawson took his departure forthwith and repaired to the hotel where Merrill waited with impatience his coming. To him he related his morning visit to Sumpter, and the information that he had gained from him.

'Alas!' said Merrill; 'all then is over—my high hopes vanish—all——'

'Nay—nay,' interrupted Dawson; 'all shall yet be well, I have an invitation to attend the wedding, and was also desired by Sumpter to bring my friend with me; of course it is quite impossible for him to know who he is.'

'But I could not———'

'Oh yes,' again interrupted the zealous Dawson, 'you must; it is the only course. You can disguise yourself so that he will not know you; and I can introduce you as an uncle of mine, just returned from a voyage around the world.'

'Well—well—it can do no harm; and I shall behold her once more!' replied Eugene, despairingly. 'And then I—yes—I will then return to my post and give my short remaining existence to the service of my country. Oh God! that I should ever come to this! But the villain shall be punished! No—I cannot now injure him without inflicting an injury upon his affianced. When it is all over I will return this precious casket, so dear to my eyes, and tell her of the joy it has has given me in the hours of affliction. Tell her that it once saved my life; but ah! now I would that it had not arrested the little messenger aimed at my heart! The sad scene which I am about to witness would have been spared me.'

'Come! come!' returned Dawson. 'These feelings become not a brave heart like thine! Cheer up! Hope on! while the beauteous girl is yet free from the arms of the unscrupulous villain. Let us prepare for the events of to-morrow.'

'Be it as you will!' returned Merrill. 'But I am not in a mood to———'

'Never mind,' interrupted Dawson, 'leave all to me.'

* * * * * * *

Let us again return to the mansion of the beautiful but still demented Effie—the intended victim of a cowardly, criminal and imbecile Southerner, sanctioned by an unfeeling and avaricious uncle, the dupe of the soulless and fiendish Singleton.

It was a dark and gloomy morning—the rain poured, and almost flooded the streets of the city, and the prospect of a pleasant day was anything but flattering. Effie was seated at a window, gazing alternately at the black clouds which were driven before the furious blast, and upon a miniature which she held in her hand.

'He'll not come to day,' she soliloquised. 'The storm is too violent for him! The thunderbolt might descend upon his devoted head and crush him to the earth! No, I know he'll not brave a tempest like this! To-morrow I shall see him—the sun will then shine—the birds will sing—and the sweet flowers will look fresh and beautiful! Ah! then he will come!——'

Farther utterance of the thoughts of her distempered mind was now arrested by the entrance of Mr. Stanwood, who gently communicated to her that that was her wedding-day, and that he would send her maids to assist in arraying herself for the bridal hour.

'Not to day? he will not come to-day?' said Effie, enquiringly.

'Yes, to-day,' he answered.

'But do you not behold the raging of the elements? Think you he will dare to venture forth in such a storm as this?'

'Yes my child.'

'I shall be glad to see him, but I like not such a day as this for my bridal!'

'It will be more pleasant by and by,' said Mr. Stanwood, as he retired from the room.

Having given instructions to Effie's waiting-women to repair to her room and assist in arraying their beautiful mistress for the nuptials, and also charging them to make no conversation with her on the subject, he repaired to his library, where he found Sumpter and the Attorney, who had already arrived and awaiting with patience the bridal hour.

The magnificently furnished parlors were now thrown open, and just before the clock struck twelve, Mr. Dawson, and his friend, entered. They were met by Sumpter with a cordial greeting, when Dawson formally introduced his friend, Captain Kelleran, who had the day before completed his voyage around the world. Sumpter begged them to be seated and to excuse him for a few moments, when he should have the felicity of introducing them to his intended bride. Dawson was now alone with his friend, and in a few moments their attention was arrested by the voice of a female, singing a plaintive air, in an adjoining apartment. Struck by the mournful and wild strains, they listened attentively, and the following simple song was distinctly heard:

They told me he was dead!
  And in the tomb was laid;—
That o'er his sacred head—
  The wild flowers bloom and fade.

How false their tidings were—
  They thought me to deceive!
Ah! now I ken he lives,
  This heart no more shall grieve.

Anon we'll meet again,
  No more on earth to part;—
Sorrow ne'er more shall reign
  Triumphant o'er this heart.

My cheeks again shall glow,
  With beauty's ruddy bloom;
My heart again will rise
  From out its dismal tomb.

With him I'll live and love;
  With him I'll mourn and die;—
With dove-like wings we'll mount
  To blissful scenes on high.

'Are not these the strains of a diseased mind?' asked the stranger.

'They sound melancholy, indeed!' returned Dawson.

Their conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Stanwood, the Attorney and the bridegroom. The strangers were introduced, and all seated themselves, to await the entrance of the beautiful bride. At length the door opened and two female attendants appeared, followed by Effie Stanwood. She was clad in a simple but graceful white robe, without jewels or other ornaments, unless we except a string of pearls, to which was attached the miniature of Eugene Merrill, and a plain white rose which rested upon her throbbing bosom. Not the slightest tinge of color was visible upon her cheeks or lips, but seemed as white and fair as the rose upon her breast. The lustre of her laughing eye was gone, and she gazed mildly not upon objects but upon the impalpable air. Her figure was erect and symmetrically beautiful, and she moved forward slowly and with the dignity of a queen. About her pearly-white neck flowed the golden tresses which grew naturally and luxuriantly from her well-shaped head. In the language of the poet, she was

'Light as the angel shapes that bless
An infant's dream, yet not the less
Rich in all woman's loveliness—'

Her father approached her as she entered the room, and taking her by the hand he led her towards Singleton, who stood, with a prayer-book in his hand, ready to perform the bridal service. The maiden stopped, and glancing her eyes about the room, said with a low but mournful voice,

'He has not yet come?'

'Is not this madness?' whispered the stranger into the ears of Dawson, both of whom sat in another part of the room.

'She looks like a maniac angel!' replied the latter.

'Oh God! that I should ever see her thus. Their hellish schemes must be thwarted. I'll make one effort if I die in the attempt!' sternly whispered the stranger.

'Not yet, not yet!' hurriedly replied Dawson.

Sumpter now approached the Justice, when Mr. Stanwood placed Effie's hands in his. She turned, and looking him full in the face for a moment, withdrew her hand suddenly from his grasp, and saying,

'You are not Eugene! he has not yet come. I must wait patiently for him!'

'Take her hand,' commanded Singleton. 'Our solemn rites must not be interrupted.'

'Never!' exclaimed Effie. 'Ah! I have been deceived!' she cried, looking wildly about her; 'what means this bridal array?'

Mr. Stanwood and Sumpter now seized the terrified maiden, who had partially awoke to consciousness, and they endeavored to hold her while the ceremony could be performed. She uttered a shrill and terrific scream and fainted. Even while in this state the Justice commenced reading the marriage service.

'Oh God! I cannot look upon this scene longer!' exclaimed the stranger to Dawson, and boldly approaching the Justice, he commanded him to desist.

'Who dares thus interrupt our solemn rites?' demanded Singleton.

'Villain, leave my house!' added Stanwood.

'Whoever you are,' said Sumpter, 'begone instantly, or you shall suffer for your audacity!'

'Are ye men, or are ye devils!' answered the stranger. 'Think you that the laws will sanction this diabolical outrage upon an insane and unconscious maiden?'

'Who are you that is so bold of speech?' demanded Sumpter.

'One who knows thee for a villain! a coward! and a puppy!' answered the stranger, as he threw off his disguise, and appeared before them in the full uniform of an officer of the United States army.

'Merrill!' exclaimed all, thunderstruck at beholding the sudden metamorphose.

Sumpter grated his teeth, and a fiendish smile stole over his features. He clenched the hilt of a dagger firmly in his hand, and approaching his rival, he suddenly drew it forth, and was about to strike it to his heart, when his arm was suddenly arrested by Dawson, who had watched narrowly every movement of the villain. Turning round, he was in the act of plunging it into him who had dared to interfere in his last desperate effort of revenge, but Merrill drew his sword quickly from its sheath, and in time to knock the weapon from the assassin's grasp ere he could accomplish his murderous intent!

All of this was but the work of a moment, and gave no time for the interference of others. Sumpter was enraged to excess and almost incontrollable. At length finding further resistance useless, and his great scheme wholly frustrated, he began to rail, in barbarous terms, at his treacherous friend, Dawson.

'Ungrateful dog!' exclaimed he, 'this then is your work! This is my reward for raising a beggar to a gentleman, and keeping him from starving!'

'Yes,' replied Dawson, 'and when in your service, I came near running my neck into the noose of the hangman.'

'And you shall not escape now; you shall be punished as a deserter, and death is the penalty!'

'Do not flatter yourself,' returned Dawson; 'through the influence of my true and honest friend, I have obtained an honorable discharge.'

During this conversation, Merrill knelt before the couch, on which reclined the unconscious Effie, while her attendants were endeavoring to restore her. At length signs of life became apparent, and gradually she opened her eyes, and with a fixed stare for many moments bent them upon her lover. He took her delicate hand within his own, and pressing it to his lips, gently breathed her name. She raised herself suddenly, threw her arms fondly about his neck, and exclaimed,

'Eugene! Eugene! he lives! he lives!'

The tears flowed copiously down her pale cheeks; not tears of grief, but tears of joy; and once more the light of reason illuminated the soul of our lovely heroine. She clung to the noble form of Merrill, and gazed long and fondly upon his handsome features.

A rupture was now taking place between Singleton and Stanwood, who had been in earnest conversation for several minutes.

'I shall reveal all!' exclaimed Stanwood; 'on that I am resolved!'

'On your head, then, will fall the dreadful penalty. Death! the gallows!' returned the Attorney.

'Far better than the vengeance of an angry Deity!'

'Even that you will not escape!' muttered Singleton, as he approached the door to depart. As he opened it, the crouching figure of 'Old Meg of the Haunted Glen,' stood before him, He attempted to pass by her, but the old sybil took him by the collar and thrust him back into the room.

'Vile reptile!' she exclaimed. 'Your career on earth is nearly ended! Hell yawns to receive another devil! Stir not, or the next moment shall be your last!'

'Old Meg of the Haunted Glen!' exclaimed Stanwood, surprised at her sudden appearance.

'Old Meg no longer!' crid she as she stripped the tattered garments from her back, and tore the old grey, knotted wig from her head. 'Behold me now! ha, ha!' and a tall, erect and dignfied woman, of about forty-five years of age stood before them, with her right hand stretched forth, and gazing exultingly upon the two avaricious wretches who now stood qualing with fear before her.

'It is Catherine Ormsby! Merciful Heavens! I thought she was dead!' exclaimed Stanwood,

'Yes, but it is no fault of yours that I am not dead! You paid well for the deed, but the monster there deceived you! The hour of my revenge has now arrived.'

She retreated towards the door, and suddenly throwing it open, four constables entered the room.

'Those are the wretches!' said Catherine Ormsby, pointing to Stanwood and Singleton. 'Bind them fast! away with them to a dungeon!'

Lieutenant Merrill now called aside the leader of the legal posse, and placing in his hand a warrant from the United States Marshall bade him execute it forthwith.

The constable approached Sumpter, who was yet bandying words with Dawson, and enquired if his name was George Sumpter. He replied in the affirmative.

'Then you are my prisoner!'

'Your prisoner?' reiterated the surprised Sumpter. 'Impossible, sir!'

'Read the warrant; that will convince you.

On examination he found that he was arrested for conspiring against and placing in jeopardy the life of Lieutenant Merrill, while an officer of the army in Florida.

Finding it folly to make any resistance, and perceiving Merrill standing before Effie with a drawn sword in his hand, he submitted to be manacled and was taken, with the other prisoners, from the princely parlors of a B—— street mansion, to the gloomy dungeons of the Suffolk county Jail!

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CHAPTER XIV.

CONCLUSION.

'All's well that ends well.'

FOUR weeks more had passed away, since the arrest of the three heartless villains who have figured conspicuously throughout these pages. Effie Stanwood, under the kind and efficient attention of Catherine Ormsby—she who had nursed her in infancy—was restored to perfect health. The bloom again appeared in her cheeks, and she seemed more lovely than ever. The story of the villainy of her uncle was made known at his trial, when he, together with his accomplice, was convicted and sentenced to state-prison for life! Stanwood committed suicide the night after his sentence, leaving a written confession of all his crimes, which went far in substantiating the claims of Effie Stanwood as the heiress of an immense fortune. The Attorney, Singleton, can be seen any day, during working hours, at the Penitentiary in Charlestown. Sumpter was tried before the United States Court, and sentenced to ten years imprisonment, but through the official influence of his father obtained a pardon. He was sent abroad in a frigate, and was final shot in an affray at Port Mahon, but a year or two since.

The most pleasant part of our story is yet to be told.

On the 18th day of August, 183–, nearly three years after Eugene left Boston for Florida, a large and magnificent party were assembled to witness the union of Lieutenant Merrill and Effie Stanwood. The services were solemn and impressive; the entertainments of the evening enlivened the brilliant and animated scene; and all went 'merry as a marriage bell.' But the two happiest persons present, if we except the bride and bridegroom, were Catherine Ormsby and Edward Dawson.

Notwithstanding the many brilliant and beautiful belles, who graced the bridal party, the young officer's wife was the bright star of attraction. None could gaze upon her without being entranced with her irresistible charms. Modest and unassuming, and

'Thoughtless of Beauty, she was Beauty's self.'

Merrill, too, was one, whose noble, commanding and graceful figure, and handsome features, elicited much attraction and admiration. The story of his brave deeds, and his two wonderful escapes from death, were freely commented upon.

Merrill is still in the army, and he now ranks as Captain; and at a distant post, he with his beautiful wife and lovely little ones, are enjoying this life with greater felicity than commonly falls to the lot of nine-tenths of mankind. The old nurse, Catherine Ormsby, resides with them, and to her is invested full management of the domestic concerns of this interesting family. The family circle is often increased by the frequent visits of Lieutenants Lee and Dawson, who are attached to the same military post; the latter, through the influence of Merrill, and after receiving a degree from the Massachusetts Medical Society, obtained the appointment of Surgeon in the army, ranking as lieutenant. His medical experience having led him to the knowledge of the deleterious effects of opium and tobacco, he discarded the use of it altogether, and he is now quite a hale, hearty, and temperate man, and looks ten years younger than he did at the time we first introduced him to our readers.

'What has become of Jeff?' we imagine we hear many ask.

We lost sight of him in Florida at an interesting epoch, but we have since learned his fate. Jeff becoming 'disgwusted' with the bad morals and cowardly conduct of his master, deserted him on the night after the battle of the Ouithlacoochee, and sought refuge with Osceola and his tribe. At the conclusion of the war, he was taken prisoner and reclaimed by Sumpter's father, on whose plantation he is yet living.

Thus ends our story. Reader, farewell.

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